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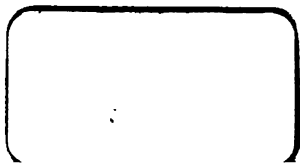


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FLAME OF THE FOREST

CONSTANCE E. BISHOP

KE 3241



Christmas Greeting -
Adeline

C. M. Kelly

FLAME OF THE FOREST

FLAME OF THE FOREST

A NOVEL

BY
CONSTANCE E. BISHOP



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO
BENZIGER BROTHERS

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NOTE

To her own harvest of Indian memories—stored up in this little book—the Author has added garnered gleanings from the valuable works of Sir J. D. Rees and of other writers upon India. To these she acknowledges her deep indebtedness.

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FLAME OF THE FOREST

CHAPTER I

THE fun of a festal evening was at its height. Inside the brightly lighted club old Grant, the ex-judge, could be heard making the piano execute marvelous gymnastic feats, as he strummed waltz tunes, lancers and polkas upon its time-honored keys.

As Jinny King ran down the grey moonlit avenue of eucalyptus trees, crushing the dry sweet-scented leaves beneath her small, well-shod feet, her heart beat rapidly with sheer vexation, for she realized that she was too late an arrival to expect many dances, and might even miss those which—if, as gossip affirmed, her cousin Frank were there—she ardently desired.

One thing after another delayed her departure. Even after she had helped her mother and her sister Clytie into their toilettes, there had been sundry household duties to attend to, trifles which were always left to Jinny's capable and apparently tireless hands.

The girl—a delicately built brunette—looked very pretty in her simple white muslin gown, open about her rounded throat, and without any adornment but a bunch of heliotrope tucked into its folded waist band. Her hair, which was very abundant, soft and silky, was dressed in a coronal upon her small shapely head; the moonlight gleamed upon a silver pin, shot like an arrow into its warm darkness.

As Jinny ran along, she wound a gauzy scarf about her shoulders.

Twinkling lights were cast by the club windows into the lake upon whose verge it stood, and from

whose shores the hills rose up in graceful undulations. Green and well-wooded, cut by contour paths, dotted with bungalows, they swept now backward to jungle fastnesses, now upward to the highest height, a steep lonely sharp-pointed spur belonging to the far-off Western Ghats.

The evening was chilly; a scent of roses hung upon the air, and blended with the more poignant blue-gum odor.

A gate shut off the Kings' garden from the main road. It lay in a pool of darkness beneath two massive trees. As Jinny ran into the obscurity her waist was gripped, and she was firmly held.

"Frank!"

"Hush! I thought I should catch you here, my little darling!"

Her face was raised, and kisses showered upon it, despite her protestations. Presently Jinny disengaged herself, and patted her somewhat disheveled hair into order.

"We must join mother and Clytie in the club," she said firmly.

"No, I shall lose you there. Come and sit in the club compound, and let's have a talk."

"Only for a few minutes, then we must join the dancers, Frank."

"Very well, only for a moment, then," said he.

The cousins crossed the road and, passing into the moonlit tennis courts, sat down upon a bench. Behind them was a high, netted barrier, and beyond a mass of undergrowth threaded by narrow paths, bordered by wild or cultivated flowers: a brake that might or might not conceal observant eyes and listening ears.

Frank threw his arm across the back of the rustic seat, and gazed with adoring eyes at his little seventeen-year-old cousin. He was young, and fancied

himself very much in love. An almost penniless creeper, he meant to work hard, so hard that his "boss"—the Scotch planter Crichton—would soon take him into partnership. How this was to be done while he could not finance his own side of the compact, the boy had not troubled to inquire; love in its calf-stage admits of no obstacles. He was good-looking and attractive, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and if his mouth was feeble, a small moustache shaded its faults effectually.

"When did *you* come up, Frank?" asked Jinny. "Our *bhoy* told me you were in the club this morning, but you never came round to call on mother." She spoke somewhat reproachfully.

"My darling," said the young man hastily, "I hadn't time. I was deeply involved in poker with old Grant, McIntyre, and Vaughan. We played from tiffin onward, and I had roaring luck; made enough to wipe off my club bills, and plenty over. I shall have a bangle made for you out of the proceeds."

"They will claim their revenge, and then you'll lose it all as you did before," sighed the girl, rather sadly. She realized Frank's constant ebb and flow of luck, and it worried her.

"Ah, but there's no time. I'm off to the estate in half an hour," said he.

"But— isn't that mean?" she faltered.

"Jinny—I'll tell you. All yesterday I felt desperate. I was on the rocks. Mosuffa Khan demanded interest, and I had to keep him quiet. Crichton is in Madura on business. I borrowed some rupees which were paid into the estate. Now I can put them back before he turns up to-morrow."

"But, Frank—it's—stealing!" cried the girl. Her voice rose shrilly in her keen distress.

"Hush! What nonsense, darling! All will be

returned by dawn to-morrow; he'll never be the wiser. Come, kiss me, Jinny—say you are not cross! It won't occur again."

The air of a popular waltz thrilled with a subtle tenderness the scented atmosphere; the moonlight and love's infatuation enthralled the girl, and her rebuke was not repeated.

A few moments passed, then an abrupt chord was crashed out, and silence followed. The club doors were thrown open, and a gay throng of dancers swept into the garden. As Frank and Jinny walked forward to mingle with the revelers, a slight crouching girlish form, gowned in soft silk of the palest shade of blue, rose from behind the bench, and, leaving the ambuscade of undergrowth, ran lightly along a by-path toward the club.

"Well, Frank, so you've come up, have you?"

Mrs. King gave a cheek to her nephew; her tone was as cold as the salute she received almost with resentment. Then she flicked Jinny's bare arm with her small ivory fan.

"How late you are, child!" she exclaimed irritably. "You've missed a lot of dances!"

Jinny murmured an excuse, and turned away to greet Mr. Grant, the ex-judge and able pianist, who was a particular friend of hers.

"I'm off again immediately, Aunt Etta," laughed Frank, a trifle awkwardly. "You see, the coolies are already in the road. So it's how d'ye do and good-by, I'm afraid. How's Uncle Tom?"

"Oh! very well when he wrote to me from Tuti, but his boat claims his attention rather more than a wife can put up with sometimes," sighed Mrs. King, who, whilst enjoying life very thoroughly, liked to give herself airs of a somewhat neglected, under-valued grass-widow, relegated by an absentee husband to the lonely exile of a small hill station.

"Give him my love when you write," exclaimed her nephew, and raising his hat, made swiftly for the main road.

A moment later, seated in an armchair strung on two poles, he was whirled away into the darkness by four trotting coolies. Mrs. King watched her nephew's departure with some satisfaction.

"I hope he didn't come across Jinny and flirt with her," she murmured.

Turning round, she was startled at finding her elder daughter, Clytie, just behind her.

"My dear, how you made me jump!" she exclaimed pettishly.

"As the frog remarked when he was created, dear mama," flippantly replied a blue-robed damsel, with a little spurt of laughter. Then, making an elfin grimace, she added bitterly:

"Frank *has* been playing the fool again with Jinny, if you wish to know."

"I thought as much. Well, we must put a stop to it at once," answered her mother tartly. "Tell me about it, Clytie."

When Captain King, of the B.I. steamer, "Tiger," married Etta Gomez, the pretty daughter of a poor Eurasian merchant, at some port of Malabar, everybody affirmed that the unfortunate fellow had committed social suicide. He himself was a fair-haired, well-bred Saxon, easy going—rather too much so, in fact, or he would not have fallen a prey to Gomez' scheming. His only brother was soon afterward shot during some riots in Calcutta, leaving a motherless babe unconscious of its loss, to wit, young Frank, then only in long clothes, and about to sail homeward in his ayah's care, afterward a creeper upon the higher range, penniless save for a small income inherited from his mother.

When Captain King installed his bride in a pretty bungalow at Pulnaikanal, the girl was at first cold-shouldered by the station. Presently, realizing that she was virtuous, discreet, and harmless, also most grateful for any crumbs of kindness, Mrs. Vaughan, the leading lady of the station, a widow and a devout Catholic, took her under her patronage and protection. Mrs. King was a Protestant. For prudential, social reasons her father had deserted the Syrian Christian community for the Anglican. Mrs. Vaughan liked and afterward pitied the pretty half-caste, the first year of whose married life was marred by the disappearance of her baby boy, and the murder of his ayah. Although the child's body was not discovered, he probably had been also killed. Mrs. Vaughan, even in those days, was in failing health; later on, when Mrs. King's two daughters were born, she was an invalid, whose basket carriage, drawn by a cream colored Pegu pony, was one of the features of Pulnaikanal. Her son—a man now between thirty and forty, and still unmarried—was in the police.

Captain King's exchequer did not permit him to send his daughters home for their education, nor would his wife have approved of the idea. The girls went to a boarding-school not too far-off, in a fashionable hill station, whilst their father and mother generously denied themselves to meet even this expense. When Clytie was eighteen, and Jinny two years younger, they were regarded as "finished," and old enough to "come out," which they did one Christmas at a dance given by Captain and Mrs. King in the Pulnaikanal Club. To this came young Frank, aged two and twenty, who immediately fell head over heels in love with his younger cousin. With youth's liking for secrecy, he held Jinny captive to a weakly-given promise not to tell her parents

about her wooing, assuring the child that he would ask her in marriage as soon as Crichton took him into partnership, of the remoteness of which contingency Jinny was supremely ignorant. The boy and girl basked in the glamor of this secret romance, and thought their world blind to lovers' meetings and stolen kisses. True, Jinny, who was devoted to her family and home, often longed to take her mother, if not Clytie, into her confidence; yet she never dreamed that there was anything underhand in her behavior. The girls in Madame's select establishment—all the pretty ones, at any rate—had secret sweethearts; she had often longed for the day to come when she, too, should have a lover. From Clytie sympathy could not be expected, therefore Jinny was never tempted to open her heart to her elder sister. Clytie apparently scorned love, though she desired and courted admiration; Clytie had "views"—what these "views" were, Jinny had failed to gather. Moreover, Clytie had a jealous nature and a peculiar temper. But as for mother—yes, Jinny yearned at times to lay her head upon her mother's bosom, and tell her how she loved Frank. "Mother"—the very word inspired the girl with a divine emotion which would have amazed and been incomprehensible to the shallow, sentimental heart of Mrs. King. That she had a secret from this silently adored mother, was the one flaw in an otherwise perfect, rapture-breathing idyll.

Clytie and Jinny were both pretty girls, dark-eyed and olive tinted. To none of his offspring had Captain King bequeathed his fair hair and blue grey eyes. Mrs. King thought this omission needlessly unkind; it was one of the minor grievances she hoarded up in miserly fashion against her absent husband. It must not be imagined that she lacked affection for her spouse, quite the contrary; only

she loved herself, and especially a grievance, infinitely better.

"Well, Miss Jinny," said old Grant, the ex-judge, to whom it will be remembered the girl had turned when embarrassed by her mother's awkward comments upon her late arrival at the club dance. "Miss Jinny, I have seen nothing of you lately. Are you coming to choir practice to-morrow? We ought to run through our solo together, unless you don't mean to sing one. Ladies, if you'll excuse me for saying so, are kittle cattle, and perhaps you've changed your mind since I last saw you."

The girl laughed kindly at the little grey-bearded, shrewd-eyed man, whose hair was so deliciously curly that she thought what fun it would be to twine her fingers round its grizzled spirals.

"Cattle?" said she, raising her arched eyebrows. "Then I shall moo or low, shan't I, if I attempt the solo?"

"Like the wind from the western sea, eh?" he retorted, combing his vandyke beard with his dainty artistic fingers. He was inordinately vain of his personal appearance, and loved that absurd petiteness which, in the Courts, had earned him the sobriquet of "Bijou Judge."

"I'll be in the church at eleven, if that will suit you," said Jinny.

"Beautifully. Then I suggest that you and your sister breakfast with me next week, and that we have a good practice. You must brush up on your songs and be ready for the concert in Regatta Week. I hope you haven't been poking over painting lately; you'll spoil your chest if you give way to the water-color habit, little girl."

"I love flower painting, and I love singing," pouted Jinny.

"Yes, but arts are always jealous; almost as bad as sweet'arts, as you'll find out some day, my dear. I like you when you blush, Miss Jinny; it becomes you!"

"Grant, are you going to play for us again?" asked Vaughan, who acted as master of ceremonies at the club whenever he chanced to be in Pulnaikanal. "May I have a dance?" he said to Jinny, who handed him her strangely empty card.

The little old judge skipped off with goat-like alacrity into the club-house, and leaped upon the platform. The piano responded to its master's touch, and the air swam with a seductive waltz.

As Jinny floated past her mother on the arm of the policeman, Mrs. King smiled at her and nodded; she liked Mr. Vaughan immensely. Her daughters danced admirably; Clytie had penciled Vaughan's name against several dances earlier in the evening. Mrs. King imagined that the policeman had serious intentions toward one of her pretty girls, and wondered which he admired more—she hoped that Clytie was the favored damsel.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Jinny awakened from the deep slumber of wearied youth, she rather fancied herself the victim of some earthquake until, on opening her sleepy eyes, she saw her mother standing at her bedside shaking her somewhat vigorously by the arm.

"Jinny! do get up and take this cup of tea to Clytie. She is in a temper and won't let me in."

In an instant the girl was out of bed. She yawned and swayed helplessly for a moment, still overcome by sleep, before she was able to thrust her feet into leather slippers and take the small tray from Mrs. King's trembling hand.

"What about?" she drawled sleepily. "Why is she cross?"

"Who knows?" Mrs. King shrugged her shoulders.

Who indeed? Clytie's tempers were seldom traceable to any real source; they came and had to be suffered as patiently as possible; appeased—never opposed; endured—not fought against by Clytie's family.

"Never mind your wrapper. Do make haste, or the tea will be quite cold."

Mrs. King lay down with a sigh on her daughter's bed as the girl tripped away with a slight shiver.

"It's a mercy Jinny at any rate is good-natured," she thought wearily. "But intellectual people are irritable. Clytie is very clever. Although poor Jinny can sing and paint and is quite handy, she has of course no brains—as Clytie says."

Mrs. King did not look her best in the early morning. Hinde's curlers are unpleasantly militant in

appearance, especially when ranged row after row upon a dusky head, and the good lady's wrappers—she affected white—were often rumpled and tea or coffee stained. The Kings kept no ayah; the untidy, malarious looking *bhoy*, whom they called butler, and who made their chota-hazri upon the back veranda, was not allowed into the bedrooms. Assisted by a sweeper-woman, the ladies attended to their own apartments. This was another of Mrs. King's grievances. If Tom would only give up his excessive smoking they could afford an ayah: all men were selfish.

The sun shone through Jinny's window across the little bed; it gilded a quantity of water color studies—flowers, birds and butterflies—tacked in haphazard fashion upon the whitewashed walls. Even her mother had to admit that—although Jinny wasted a lot of time over these productions—they were rather beautifully done, delicate and extremely accurate. Jinny had excelled in botany when at school.

Rap-tap-tap; ah, now Jinny was hammering at the door of Clytie's bedroom.

"May I come in?" she called pleasantly. Then, after a short pause: "It's your chota, Clytie. No—mother is in my room, not here. Shall I put it down? Yes? Very well; it's just outside."

"Wouldn't she let you in?" said Mrs. King, as Jinny reappeared, and thirstily swallowed the chilled tea her mother had placed upon her bedside table.

"No, she's sobbing horribly. I don't suppose she will get up to-day; we must just put her meals outside her door, and leave her. Perhaps she'll get up for dinner."

Jinny sat down, pulled on her stockings and brushed out her hair. It rippled to her waist, and half veiled her little face. Mrs. King admitted that

Captain King had at least been thoughtful in one respect: he had given his children wavy hair—her own was straight.

"Aren't you going away to get dressed, mother?" said Jinny.

Mrs. King made no movement.

"Jinny," she said abruptly, "I hope there's no nonsense going on between you and Frank. Did he come here after Clytie and I had gone to the club last night? If not, where did you meet him?"

"At the gate," said Jinny. She ignored her mother's first question, and brushed her hair across her blushing face. Mrs. King could see the agitated tell-tale beat of the young heart through her child's thin peignoir.

"He had been playing cards all day," continued Jinny hurriedly, "and said he was sorry he hadn't been to see you, mother. Afterward you met him, you remember."

"Come here, Jinny."

"I can't, mother. My hair is horribly tangled, and I must get it straight."

With a gesture of impatience Mrs. King rose from the bed, and stood upright.

"Well, understand this," she drawled lazily, for she did not intend to lose her temper, "your father would be furious if he thought that you and Frank were sweet on each other, and, of course, I should be blamed for it. He is your cousin, and that's one thing against it, and he's extravagant, and in debt, and—not honest, any way."

With a cry, Jinny dropped the brush and faced her mother.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and she grew pale to the very lips. "Who told you so?" she faltered.

The mother read her child's countenance like an open book. Although she pitied Jinny, she resolved

immediately and ruthlessly to crush what Clytie had assured her was a full-blown romance.

"He has often helped himself to rupees during the absence of Mr. Crichton," asserted Mrs. King boldly.

"Often?" exclaimed Jinny. "Once, mother—only once, and then he was going to put them back immediately, he told me so. And—oh! it was in confidence he told me! I have betrayed him!"

At this juncture another girl might have broken down; Jinny was tearless—unlike her sister, she very rarely wept, and then only in secret. To cry before another, even her own mother, would have shamed her.

"Please go away, mother dear, I want to dress," she said steadily, and Mrs. King departed without another word.

It was that season when the wattle "flings out her golden hair" in Pulnaikanal, the hills were yellow with its bunched, button-like blooms, and the air was fragrant with their elusive sweetness. A wide, well-kept, sandy road ran round the lake from the club to Jackal Shola, the Protestant Cemetery, at its upper end. There the road branched, climbing to the Pindar House—old Grant's residence, and to the Vaughans' bungalow, with the Catholic Church beside it. The Protestant Church stood sheer above the road, not very far from the club as the crow flies, upon the edge of a contour path which fringed the hills, and from whose narrow altitude sloped, here steeply, there very gently, the Ghats' descent into the lower levels and plains. This path, known as Locker's Walk after the name of the engineer who had devised it, was a very popular constitutional with the inhabitants of Pulnaikanal; on Sundays church parade was held there in couples or in single file.

Jinny climbed up a zigzag pathway to the church; she could already hear the American organ being played, so Mr. Grant, and probably the choir, were there before her; her tiny watch told her that she was ten minutes late. The door being open, Jinny walked into the church.

It was a simple white-washed edifice, with plain, greenish tinted, rather high set windows. Some brasses ornamented the sober walls; the open sittings were simply varnished, the communion table had an austere frontal, a brass cross, and empty vases. There were choir seats and a fair organ. The church was useful but quite unornamental, scrupulous cleanliness was its besetting chief virtue.

"How late you are!" exclaimed Mr. Grant, in his thin falsetto voice.

"Where is the choir?" answered Jinny. Save for their two selves the edifice was empty.

"*We* are the choir; the rest prayed me to have them excused. 'We have been dancing all night, and therefore we cannot come.' But what does it matter? Nothing at all, Miss Jinny! You and I are the only ones who count. We lead the flock, we who can sing: with the others it's mere bleating."

Jinny laughed. "Sing, sing, what shall I sing?" she quoted merrily.

"The anthem, or rather your solo, whilst your voice is fresh. It's spring time somewhere or other, if not here, so 'He shall feed His flock' will be appropriate, and suit the April air which hangs about this halcyon spot when the mimosa's out."

Jinny had a clear mezzo-soprano voice. Its quality suggested the delicate grace of the girl herself; fullness of tone would come later on, as she developed, purity now constituted its especial charm.

"Now the Te Deum and the Psalms," she pleaded, when the solo had been approved by her music-master. "Those you can sing with me, Mr. Grant."

Their voices rose and fell, now in unison, and then in part together.

"I love church music," said Jinny when they had finished. "In fact, it's the only part of church which I really love. Imagine a music-less service, Mr. Grant!" She shuddered. "I don't understand religious people," she went on. "Mrs. Bevan, for instance—oh! she breathes devotion, perhaps because she is a Catholic. But after all, when all's said and done, what do so many prayers amount to? They seem rather a waste of time to me, unless you sing them—that is different. Oh! what is the good of all this religion business, that people discuss and fight for?"

Mr. Grant threw out both hands with a despairing gesture, then ran his fingers among his wiry curls.

"What is the good of religion? What is the good of love? The enjoyment of emotions, Jinny—when it is *bona fide*; otherwise a decent convenience, part of one's up-bringing. Children are taught to say they love God, and to say prayers, just as they are taught to wash their hands and brush their teeth."

"If you love people, you want to do things for them, as well as feel things, don't you? You want to please them, and carry out their wishes," retorted Jinny, "as well as enjoy your feelings."

"Just so. Well, a religious man—as I said before—is taught to be religious, and, when well taught, serves his particular church or god just as unreasonably and willingly as a dog obeys his master, jumps for a biscuit, holds a lump of sugar on his nose till given leave to eat it, dies for his god or country. Religion is often a parlor trick, my dear. It becomes Mrs. Bevan even better than needlework or spinet playing. But you exhaust me, Jinny, when you talk upon abstruse topics."

"Why do you come here?" Jinny indicated their surroundings.

"For the same reason as yourself—for the music, Jinny."

"Yes, as I said at the beginning, it's the music that counts," answered the girl decisively. "Do let us run through that *Te Deum* again, Mr. Grant."

When her sister had set out for choir practice, and Mrs. King had gone, presumably to pay a call, Clytie, who had now recovered from her fit of violent emotion, arose from her somewhat tumbled bed, and dressed. Unlike their neighbors, the Kings did not indulge in tiffin—chiefly to save a small expenditure of money which they preferred to spend on frills and furbelows. They breakfasted at ten, had an early but satisfying tea at about three o'clock—supplemented by a dainty tray in the drawing-room later on if visitors arrived—and dined at eight. A well-filled breakfast tray had been placed outside Clytie's door at the usual hour. Refreshed and calm, clad in a neat blouse and skirt, her hair nicely coiled, she now sat down to write a letter before escaping into the open air. She intended to pass the day boating upon the lake; a pile of books were already strapped together—works she was keen on studying carefully. When it was time to dress for dinner, she could return to the bosom of her family, who were sure to make no allusion to her outbreak of temper. It was one of her own unwritten and arbitrary laws that they should not dare to do so, and they never did.

The letter took some little time to write, and Clytie made more than one rough draft before she was apparently satisfied. The final copy was penned with extreme care, after some keen scrutiny of a heap of scattered papers set out upon the table—letters written to Clytie by her mother when the girl was at school. Her task finished, Clytie carefully burned her scribbled attempts at the open window,

and blew the ashes into the garden; the fair copy was placed in an addressed envelope, and stamped and sealed. For a few moments the writer stood beside her window, and meditated with set lips and half closed eyes; then, stretching out her hand, she plucked a spray of the crimson and white rose that veiled the dilapidated exterior of the bungalow, and placed it in her belt. Humming a tune, she pinned a large shady hat upon her tresses, creamed and powdered her tell-tale features thickly, and passing from her bedroom through the dining-room, departed from the house, swinging her packet of books in one hand.

Consulting her watch, she saw that the time was nearly half past eleven; in a moment the tappel would be leaving Pulnaikanal for the plains. As she waited at the gate beneath the shady trees, she could hear the patter of two coolies' feet. They soon approached her at a jog-trot. The post carrier ran slightly in advance of his overseer, a sealed bag nicely balanced upon his shaven head; behind him ran his superior, bearing a long spear lightly in one hand. Clytie held up an imperious finger, and the panting runners halted.

"Post this for me," said the girl haughtily, and slipped a small coin into the conductor's hand.

He salaamed, took the extended letter, slipped it into his garment, and the man ran on.

The girl made her way down the road, crossed a bridge, and stepped into a boat-house opposite the club. She met nobody. It was now very hot, and weary Pulnaikanal doubtless kept siesta. Tiny wavelets lapped against the moored canoes and skiffs inside the shanty; a light breeze dusked and shivered the longer ripples on the water. Upon the lake's bosom, out beyond the shadows of trees and hills, a myriad diamonds, elusive children of the sunbeams,

blazed and sparkled. Clytie loosed a boat, unshipped its oars, and rowed out to an islet where, under some tall reeds, she could find shade and shelter in which to read and think in peace. The spot was only a stone's throw from the bank; any one who passed was visible, and his voice audible to the hidden invisible observer near the island. Clytie loved the haunt. She had often seen and heard many strange things from this secure retreat—things calculated to give her a hold some day over her fellow creatures. She liked power, whether to hurt or heal, to lure or terrify. At school the younger girls had either feared or worshipped Clytie King.

Now she shipped the oars, threw off her hat, and piled some books upon a cushion; lying at full length in the boat, she leaned upon her elbows and began to study.

They were strange volumes to interest a girl—up-to-date or old-fashioned works on anatomy and medicine. Yet they kept her attention firmly riveted, her body in repose, for about two hours. It was after two o'clock when, feeling hungry, she turned and sat down. Leaning her weary shoulders against the cushions, she unpacked some bananas she had brought from home, and slowly ate them. Then, clasping her slim hands behind her head, she gave herself up to thought; the idea of woman, and the notion of her own self as an incarnate feminine obsessed her.

"If one were rich, it wouldn't matter what one did," she mused, "whether one married or remained unmarried. A girl with wealth at her command is powerful any way. Jinny and I have nothing. Jinny must marry, and marry well to make it worth our while to part from her—poor Jinny has no brains—but for myself? Ah! that's another question! Suppose I married him—what would—what could he

give me to make it worth such slavery in the long run? Sometimes I am certain that I love him—for instance, yesterday; then I am torn with jealousy and despair because he says nothing to me, and talks to other girls. To-day all that fuss and pain seem wasted time. It is waste of time for a girl with any brains. If only I were a man! Then all would be so simple, so untrammelled. Poor womenfolk! If we penniless damsels remain single, our families—father, mother, sister—are millstones round our necks; conventions are our fetters. If we marry, a husband holds us at his beck and call. Millstones either way. Men have no fetters unless they choose to forge them. Oh, for such liberty! Yet perhaps slavery with Philip Vaughan were sweeter!”

She unwound her fingers, clasped her hands round her knees, and sighed.

All around her nature basked in contented loveliness; bees wooed the honeyed balsam of florets upon the islet, and bird sang to bird. She alone was restless and dissatisfied.

How long she sat there, weighing the pros and cons of matrimony, she knew not, but presently she heard the approach of a carriage along the sandy road that wound beside the lake. Peeping through a screen of reeds and long pointed leaflets, Clytie could see Mrs. Vaughan approaching in her pony chaise; her son walked beside the animal, and flicked tormenting flies from its ears with a large leaf.

“Let us stay here for a few minutes,” said the invalid. “It is so cool and pleasant by the water in this shady spot.”

Mrs. Vaughan was not only a charming old lady, but one who was fully aware of her good points, and made the most of them. She did not spoil her mass of snow-white hair by depressing its natural buoyancy beneath a hat. No, its waved and Pom-

padour-dressed wealth was charmingly enhanced by a mantilla, and a lace parasol—black, with a scarlet lining—lent at the same moment both light and shade to her dainty Dresden shepherdess complexion. For the rest, she was gowned in a simple yet grandiose half Spanish style. She was the leading lady of the station; her personality revealed her status.

Yet though undeniably proud of her appearance and position, and more than proud of her beloved only child and son, Mrs. Vaughan had not a proud soul—she was never haughty. Dignified, yes; pompous and pharisaical—no, never. Her heart was kind and warm, her hand open and generous; she loved to raise the weak and fallen, to help the penitent.

Her son was the replica of his mother: brown haired, grey eyed, with classic features, tall and well proportioned. For the present he was stationed in Pulnaikanal, but he might have to leave for the plains any day.

"My dear, I want to speak to you," said Mrs. Vaughan gently—yet Clytie overheard every word she spoke—"I don't want to be offensive, but we have always had straight talks with each other, have we not?"

"Say on, my dearest mother," replied Vaughan, with a tender laugh. "Attack all my peccadilloes and I'll thank you. I vastly prefer your sermons to those of Father Robins."

"You're very good-looking," went on the mother softly. "Much more attractive than you yourself are aware, I fancy."

"Oh, Lord, my dearest, cry a halt somewhere!" exclaimed the son, opening his cigarette case and lighting a nerve sustainer. "This is maternal flattery, instead of admonition!"

"The rest follows as a matter of course," said

Mrs. Vaughan. "It isn't that I don't wish you to fall in love and marry," she continued, "but I want it to be with the right girl, my dear, one who is an equal and a good Catholic. I am certain I should make an ideal grandmama, and your wife and the babies could make their home with me in the hot weather. Meanwhile, as you are unlikely to meet the sort of girl I should wish to have as a daughter-in-law up here, be careful not to flirt with the girls you do meet, darling."

"Easier advice to give than to take, mother," said he jocosely; "but be consoled. I am sure the majority regard my greying hairs with some displeasure, and look on me as a hopeless benedick. They know I am tied to my mother's apron strings, and that the grande dame is a frightful dragon!"

"They do not *all* think so," retorted Mrs. Vaughan. "I am certain one girl at least has lost her heart to you, and I am sorry, very sorry for her."

"My dear, don't look so triste! Name me no names, but I'll be more careful for the future. At the same time, I think you're quite mistaken: motherly jealousy—which I mean in the sense of *zealous*, so do not be offended—has blinded your dear eyes."

"It is you who are blind, Philip," retorted Mrs. Vaughan. "Everyone knows that Clytie King has fallen in love with you! There! I was very wrong to name the child, but you provoked me!"

It was quite obvious that Vaughan was genuinely astonished. He flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Why, hang it all, mother, you make me feel ashamed!" he answered. "The idea is quite preposterous. I am twice her age, and knew her when she was in short frocks. Do you remember what a dusky little thing she used to be at five or six years old?"

His momentary vexation passed, and he laughed heartily.

"Your next idea will be that your young ayah is smitten with my imaginary charms," said he.

"Philip—don't be so brutal!" expostulated his mother. "Clytie's mother may be a half-caste, but Captain King is quite a well-bred man."

"You mistake my meaning altogether," said Vaughan gravely, and in a lower voice. "Suppose we drop an unpleasant subject, mother."

"I began it for your own good. Now that I have warned you, we can cease to discuss the matter," said Mrs. Vaughan, very coldly. "Please take me to the club, Philip. I will have tea there, and watch the tennis."

Vaughan flicked the Pegu pony with a touch of temper—the carriage and its attendant were soon out of sight.

The girl in the boat lifted a livid face; her countenance was so contorted by shame and rage that it seemed agonized; her brow was even bedewed with clammy drops; her lower lip bled where the teeth had pressed it.

"An ayah! He likened me to a native! Heavens! I wish I had him here, that I could strangle him!" she panted. "I, Clytie King, am on a par with a native, am I? An ugly, low caste ayah he would scorn to touch!"

She twisted her hands together, then suddenly choked. A gust of hysteria overwhelmed the tempestuous creature, she pressed her fingers firmly against her throat to arrest an approaching storm of mingled tears and laughter. The boat rocked to and fro in agitation, as though it sympathized with a human creature's mortal anguish.

The sun blazed down less fiercely now; the sounds and scent of nature grew ever sweeter. All creatures

were in harmony with creation and with one another; only in the passionate soul of the young girl reigned discord and revolt.

Thus for a time surges of passion beat and clamored fiercely.

"I cannot hurt you now, Philip—not now!" she muttered, when her soulstorm had sunk at last to rest, quelled by the dominant power of her strong will. "But some day Fate will surely deliver you into my hands. Then I will break your heart, as you have broken mine!"

As Pedro, the Kings' butler, placed the soup tureen on their dinner-table, Clytie entered the room, and without a word quietly sat down in her usual place opposite to her sister. She was rather carefully gowned in white. Although she was very pale, and dark circles ringed her large eyes, her expression was calm and peaceful. Neither Mrs. King nor Jinny commented upon her diurnal absence—Clytie's unwritten law made this impossible—they behaved as though nothing unusual had happened, and talked upon ordinary topics. Clytie remained silent.

Jinny was dressed in white muslin like her sister. Mrs. King wore a new confection made for her by the native tailor, and modeled upon what she believed were really Parisian lines. She expected the Captain home on leave very shortly, hence the new dinner-gown. It arrived that evening, and she hoped her daughters, especially Clytie, would approve of it. There was a subtle double arrangement about the dress; it had a scarlet satin underskirt, and a low-cut bodice beneath an overdress of cream-colored tinsel-bordered gauze, a length of material presented to Mrs. King by her husband upon his last home-coming. She had dressed her hair quite low, and wore a double necklace of red coral.

Presently Mrs. King became uncomfortably impressed by Clytie's unbroken silence, by a certain facial immobility accompanied by the stare of dark and somber eyes. She fidgeted restlessly beneath her daughter's unblinking, hostile gaze, but dared not expostulate until dessert had been placed upon the table, and Pedro had finally withdrawn to the back veranda. Then at last she spoke up in desperation.

"Do you like my new gown, Clytie, dear?" she asked.

"It suits you," sneered the girl, drawing in a sing-song imitation of the Eurasian accent. "It certainly becomes you, mama, and emphasizes your charming Eastern cachet. In fact you look exactly like—an ayah!"

Mrs. King shrank back in her chair with a swift appealing gesture, turned her shoulder on Clytie, and her face and extended hands to Jinny. She even cried out as if in pain, and moaned like some wounded creature or suddenly kicked dog.

In an instant Jinny was on her knees beside her mother. She drew the loved face between her hands, and stroked the tear-stained cheeks, murmuring words of tenderness and pity. To Clytie she paid no heed at all, even when the latter greeted this touching scene with a mocking peal of laughter.

There was a discreet cough behind the cloth screen which separated the dining apartment from the drawing-room. Then Pedro entered, carrying a buff envelope upon a salver.

"A telegram," he jerked out nervously.

Mrs. King pulled herself together, and Jinny rose to her feet. Clytie continued peeling a banana.

"It must be from your father, my darlings, to say when we may expect him. Perhaps he is coming to-night," said Mrs. King.

Pedro coughed in an embarrassed manner.

"Ma'am——" he jerked out in trepidation, and got no further, for Mrs. King had already taken the missive in her hand and torn it open.

Her eyes scanned it rapidly. Then, with a gasp, she crumpled the piece of paper in her hand with a convulsive spasm.

"Oh, God in heaven!" she shrieked, and all at once collapsed, with a horrid thud, upon the floor.

The shriek met its echo in Jinny's cry of terror, as once more she knelt down beside her mother, and raised the unconscious head until it rested within the curve of her young arm.

Clytie sat very still; she looked at Pedro.

"Well, speak up!" she said in her imperious manner. "I suppose you know what this telegram is about?"

"Yes, missie," sniveled the miserable servant. "Master's boat went down this morning, and some of the crew were drowned, including the master."

Jinny gave a deep, tearless sob. She chafed her mother's ice-cold hands, and forced a spoonful of whisky through the loose blue lips.

"You must go and fetch Dr. McIntyre at once," she said to the now weeping butler, and he turned to go.

Clytie held up her hand.

"Wait!" she commanded. "Has the post peon gone?"

"No, missie."

"Very well," she said. "Tell him to wait whilst I write a message, and then go for a doctor. . . . I shall order suitable mourning from Madras," she observed to her sister, when the man had gone. "I know they have our measurements at Trimmer's. We can arrange for Mrs. Moser to buy all our colored clothes."

Then, without a single backward glance at her unconscious mother, Clytie left the room.

CHAPTER III

AT Clytie's request—which amounted to a command—Mrs. King denied herself and her daughters to all callers until Trimmer had sent the customary mourning; then—seated in state and clad in widow's weeds—she calmly received her visits of condolence.

Mrs. Vaughan—as the station's leading lady—was the first admitted into the still half-darkened bungalow. Apologizing for her son's involuntary absence—he had been recalled to the plains only that very day—seated upon a sofa by the side of the woman she had patronized as a bride and now in widowhood attempted to console, the kindly, stately creature held Mrs. King's hands in hers and encouraged her to give way to weeping.

"Let yourself go, it will do you good, my dear," she said sympathetically. "Tears are our comforters."

But Mrs. King had cried herself out, so to speak, before the mourning came. That sense of awe and dignity which crape ever inspires now forbade an overflow of fresh emotion. An occasional dab with a small black-bordered kerchief and intermittent sniffs at a bottle of "Crown" smelling-salts were all that by now she was capable of offering to her visitors in the way of feeling: nature has its limits. She returned the kindly pressure of the leading lady's hand and whispered muffled thanks.

"My darling was always a saint, and died a martyr's death," she murmured. "He laid down his life for his boat and passengers."

"He lived up to the high reputation which our navy bears," asserted Mrs. Vaughan.

"Died up to it, I presume you mean," interrupted Clytie rudely. She and Jinny were, of course, present at the interview, helping mother to "receive" on that sorrowful At Home day. Her sister and herself were gowned alike in well-cut soft silk dresses, low at the throat, with white lace vandyke collars. Being brunette they would look "impossible" in dead black, she had wired to the *costumier*.

"Quite so," replied Mrs. Vaughan.

She thought the girl extremely ill-behaved and mannerless, but charitably put down the indiscretion to shaken, jangled nerves.

"And now he rests in God," she added simply.

Here Mrs. King dabbed her eyes and took a whiff of salts.

"Do you *really* hold that view?" said Clytie, with arched brows and bold, inquiring eyes. "I *fancy* your Church teaches otherwise—that only Catholics go straight to heaven."

Mrs. Vaughan smiled very kindly, though interiorly she longed to slap her impertinent young questioner.

"I said that your father rests in God, my dear," she observed quietly, "and your ideas about the teaching of the Church are certainly—pure fancy."

Clytie flushed angrily and bit her lip, but she made no fresh retort, and busied herself among the tea cups. Jinny made haste to fill up the ensuing gap of awkward silence.

"Mr. Grant told me a funny story the other day," said she, "about the Bevan children."

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Vaughan.

"Yes; the Bevans' last *bhoy* drank like a fish and worried Mrs. Bevan dreadfully—indeed, sometimes she was quite ill because of him. Out of sheer pity she gave him chance after chance, but in the end dismissed him. However, the day after he was

sacked, back the poor fellow crawled—this time very ill with malaria. Mrs. Bevan nursed him herself until he died."

"I do not call that a funny story, Jinny," said Mrs. King, "but Mr. Grant's ideas——"

"Wait, mother dear; that is the end of part one, and now comes part two. On the day of Michael's funeral Mr. Grant overheard the following conversation between the Bevan children:—

" 'Tim,' said little Cathie to her big brother, 'I suppose when mummy dies she'll go to heaven because she's been so good to poor Michael.'

" 'She *may*, but I expect she won't get any further than purgatory,' answered Tim. 'She's often lost her temper with us and daddy.'

" 'How long will she stay there? What will she have to do?' asked Cathie.

" 'Well, Cathie, I expect it'll work out something like this,' said Tim. 'When she appears at heaven's gate St. Peter will say to her guardian angel: "Oh, here is Mrs. Bevan. Well, she's been very decent on the whole, but still—she's done this, that, and the other. So she must go to purgatory and rake up the red hot cinder paths for twenty years." Then the guardian angel will say: "True, St. Peter, but after all, she did not send Michael away, even though he had made her feel ill when he was drunk. Can't that be put to her credit?" So St. Peter will think a minute, and then make answer: "Good. Let her keep the cold ash walks tidy for fifteen years." But the angel will still plead for mother: "Ah, but remember, please, even after she had to dismiss Michael because Mr. Bevan made her—he—I mean Michael of course—was so very drunk, yet when he crawled back she kept him and nursed him very kindly until he died." At that St. Peter will look quite pleased, and say to the angel: "Really! that

makes a *great* difference. We cannot let Mrs. Bevan into heaven *just* yet, dear angel, but she shall come when she has cleaned out the cages of all the birds of paradise and strewn them with fresh sand!"

Mrs. Vaughan broke into a merry laugh, but Mrs. King was really scandalized.

"Jinny! what a dreadfully profane way of talking. I really am surprised at Mr. Grant telling you such a tale!" she faltered.

"But it was the Bevan children—or rather, Bevan boy—who invented it, not Mr. Grant, my dear mama," said Clytie. "Perhaps Catholic children are allowed to be funny and flippant. Are they, Mrs. Vaughan?"

Before the latter could reply, Pedro appeared in the doorway.

"His Reverence Mr. Blair and Mrs. Blair, ma'am," he announced.

As the newcomers entered, Mrs. Vaughan made her adieu to Mrs. King and Jinny. Clytie she ignored, to Clytie's secret joy—to realize that her caustic tongue had annoyed Philip's mother gave the girl huge delight. A feud opened by pinpricks bade fair to culminate in a mortal blow; as Philip adored his mother it was best and easiest to strike at him through her.

"Ah—my *dear* lady!"

The padre took Mrs. King's hands between his own.

"The beloved are ever chastened," he said below his breath—it might have been a guilty secret, so hushed was the padre's voice and so subdued his manner.

"Dear girls, I have agonized with you!" staccatoed Mrs. Blair, and added tenderly, "But *what* sweet dresses!"

She sat down on a low chair between the sisters, and spoke in whispers about the tragedy, whilst Mr. Blair leaned over Mrs. King, and, still clasping both her hands, showered half audible words of consolation upon her head.

"So shocking not to be able even to have a funeral!" sighed the parson's wife. "It reminds me of poor Mrs. Campbell's husband, who was eaten by a——"

"Some ladies and gentlemen from the Settlement," announced Pedro, *sotto voce*; he had apparently been unable to catch any names, so lumped the guests all together.

Into the room marched a noble army of Non-conformist missionaries, male and female—austere, forbidding, judicial rather than sympathetic in their manner, with antiquated, other-worldly raiment, and boots which had not tramped the roads in vain—they scattered columns of dust about the room.

Mr. Blair was obliged to give place to his fellow-workers of another fold. Their voices, some harsh and others oleaginous, ran through a gamut of Scripture quotations, some apposite, some otherwise. They harped upon the string of death with utter ruthlessness, making poor Mrs. King long to laugh or scream aloud.

"Mr. Grant," cried Pedro, raising his voice above the holy tumult.

The ex-judge appeared fairly flabbergasted at the sight of such a crowded drawing-room. As Mrs. King was unapproachable and Clytie wedged into the Church of England party, he—as needs must—turned to Jinny.

"My dear child, put me in the corner anywhere, and give me some tea—I am so thirsty," he entreated. "My dear Miss Jinny, I really do believe that the whole of Pulnaikanal spiritual must be here;

therefore protect me, the sole representative of Pul-naikanal! And to think," he added whimsically, "that I who came here to weep with you have made a vulgar pun!"

"Thank God you have!" said Jinny, and she meant it.

It would be impossible to enumerate the various individuals who called that afternoon upon Mrs. King; some honestly to try to cheer up the poor widow, others to criticize her behavior and admire or depreciate her handsome mourning garb and pretty daughters' quite unusual dresses. The majority of consolers were mainly interested in three absorbing questions: What sum of money had Captain King left behind him? Was their income even smaller than before? And, if so, how would they be able to live upon it? To these queries even echo vouchsafed no answer. There was, however, a solid foundation for them to beat against, and a very rocky one.

Taking advantage of a pause in the hubbub of consolation—an interval of rest for herself and of refreshment to her visitors—Mrs. King beckoned eagerly to Jinny.

"My dear," she said when the girl had struggled to her mother's side through the throng of perspiring tea-drinkers, "ask Mr. Grant to take pot-luck with us this evening—unless, of course, he is otherwise engaged. As he was once a judge, he may be able to help us to some definite decision. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, mother. I'll ask him to remain," agreed Jinny pleasantly.

Clytie was in a very prickly mood; a fourth—and especially such a good-humored fourth as dear old Grant—would be a blessed addition to their dinner-table.

"It is like this, you see, Mr. Grant," said Mrs. King when dinner was ended and coffee and cigarettes were being discussed by the old man and Clytie—Jinny and her mother did not smoke. "My dear, unbusiness-like husband never made a will—unless, indeed, he had one on the boat which was completely wrecked. I really think it more likely that he never made one, and Mr. Bevan quite agrees with me. Thomas was such a devout and practical Christian that he seldom or never took any thought for the morrow. We cannot blame him for a fault which is a virtue!"

"Certainly not! '*O felix culpa!*'" sighed old Mr. Grant.

Mrs. King, who had no Latin, smiled as though she understood; she thought the ex-judge very kind and just.

"So I am left with only my widow's third," she continued. "The remainder goes to my dear daughters when they come of age."

"And that's the crux," put in Clytie. "We are desperately poor, Mr. Grant, and if two years are wasted before I can use my money, we shall, by then, be poorer still. Therefore I tell mama I want my portion now—Mr. Bevan thinks he can arrange this. But mama doesn't see it in the same light as I do." She waived a cigarette excitedly, and her eyes flashed in a dangerous manner.

"My dear, listen to reason——" began Mrs. King, when the old man checked her with a courteous bow.

"Shall we hear Miss Clytie's reasons first?" he said politely. "I'm sure the reasons of such a clever young lady are worth our consideration; and, if they are valid, we must try to convert mama to Miss Clytie's point of view. If not, let mama speak, and we will try to convert Miss Clytie."

"Yes, that is quite fair," agreed Mrs. King.

"I will put the matter in a nutshell," said Clytie eagerly. "I want to work—have a profession in fact. Boys are allowed to have them; why not girls? I've got brains, and already have read anatomy and got some idea of *materia medica*. Well, I propose to go home by the next inexpensive liner, and study in London and become a woman doctor. Given my passage money, and college fees, and a mere pittance to live on, I can manage. My third of papa's money will meet all that. I shall not fail, mind you—you needn't fancy it!"

She flicked the ash from off her cigarette, and leaned back in her chair.

"Why should the dear child work when she could so *easily* marry?" pleaded Mrs. King, in a plaintive voice, to nobody in particular. She did not look at Grant.

"I shall never marry!" declared Clytie brusquely.

Old Grant eyed the pretty, imperious girl steadily. Instinctively he realized that she fully meant what she said about a professional career. Her capable hands and intellectual brow impressed him favorably: he was no mean physiognomist. The ex-judge was aware that tragedy lurked behind the big, dark eyes; he foresaw and feared harm, which inevitably would result, were such an eager temperamental nature badly thwarted.

However, having a due regard for caution: "Is the profession not overcrowded?" he suggested.

"No!" answered Clytie. "But I don't intend to carve out a career in England. I should loathe the climate. When I have taken my degree I shall return to India and get either a Government post or start a private practice in some Hindu center. I may become durbar physician to some ranee—who knows? It is quite likely."

Grant nodded.

"I entirely fall in with your daughter's views, Mrs. King," he said gravely. "I would suggest your writing immediately to Mr. Bevan. Meanwhile, as Miss Clytie naturally desires—and, I think, rightly—to sail at once, I, if you will permit me the pleasure of being your temporary banker, can write her a check to-night for the passage money. It will save time and cause me no inconvenience."

The old gentleman drew a check-book from his coat pocket.

"You are extremely good——" stammered Mrs. King, and dabbed her eyes. Emotion momentarily mastered the poor widow. Though Mr. Grant had always been their friend, never before had his friendship materialized as now.

"You are a darling!" cried Clytie, with sparkling eyes and burning cheeks. "For the future I shall always regard you as my fairy godfather!"

Grant laid a hand upon his heart and bowed. With the other hand he fumbled for his fountain pen.

"And what is little Miss Jinny going to do?" he asked, in order to change the subject.

"I want mother to take in paying guests," she answered. "So many people do it. And don't you think I might get orders for flower painting?"

The ex-judge shook his head.

"Right about the paying guests," he said, "but not so the painting: stooping would spoil your voice and fine work strain your eyes. Nobody pays enough for sketches to compensate you for these."

"At any rate we can manage boarders; and surely some advertisements in the 'Madras Post' would bring them," answered Jinny.

"Then you propose to join with your mother in this venture—pool your moneys, eh?"

"What is mine is always my mother's," said the girl. "I shall never leave her."

"Unless you marry."

"Then mother must live with me," she replied, and blushed rather vividly as she thought of Frank.

Clytie observed Mr. Grant's countenance very narrowly. It remained serene.

"I congratulate you in being the fortunate mother of two good and clever girls, Mrs. King," said he genially.

"They take after their dear, saintly father, Mr. Grant," answered the widow, and wiped away a tear. "Had my dear boy only lived they should not have toiled."

CHAPTER IV

IT seemed to Jinny as though Fate whisked her sister away before she was able to entirely realize the actual parting. Truly, until Clytie and she were torn asunder, she had never known how much she loved and secretly admired the family autocrat. A prop was, as it were, removed from the roof-tree of their home—almost she expected the tiles to fall in upon her mother and herself. To Mrs. King the wrench of separation was real agony. For nearly an hour after the coolies had borne the only too willing Clytie away from her mother's arms and whirled her along the zigzags down the ghat, did Mrs. King lean on Jinny's breast and weep. The fountains of an even greater grief than that which the deaths of her baby and her husband had occasioned were now unsealed. She clung to her youngest child and implored that she would never go away.

"I entreat you not to leave me, Jinny!" she reiterated, and the girl vowed that she never would.

"Until you see me in my coffin, Jinny!"

"Yes, dearest mother, yes. You can rely upon me. I will never leave you."

Jinny held the beloved head against her childish bosom and stroked it tenderly. Deeply as she lamented her stormy sister's passing, Jinny could not weep; the head and heart might ache; tears always failed her.

"Perhaps after all she will get engaged in England," observed Mrs. King more calmly. To this East Indian mother marriage implied the *summum bonum* of a girl's happiness. Single women she regarded with a dubious pity mingled with contempt; such were poor failures.

"Let us hope so, dear," said Jinny soothingly.

"I used to think Mr. Vaughan admired her," faltered Mrs. King, choking back a sob. "Did you, Jinny?"

"Well, he was rather attentive," said the girl. "But I think Clytie always wanted to be a doctor. You see, she has views."

Mrs. King nodded.

"It's most unfortunate when a girl develops views," she sighed. She dabbed her swollen eyelids and looked up at Jinny.

"I hope you'll get married, any way, my dear; and the sooner the better," she said, tenderly. "Perhaps somebody whom we just spoke about is really attracted to you, my darling. But there! I will say no more. You have plenty of admirers."

Jinny laughed these ideas away; but, as this seemed a propitious moment in which to throw out a hint regarding her beloved cousin and herself, "We haven't heard from Frank since father died, it's odd, isn't it?" she said wistfully, and her voice trembled.

The boy's silence had truly perplexed and troubled Jinny. Day after day she had run to the gate hoping to intercept a letter from the post peon, but all in vain. She had written more than once to the tea estate, but received no answer.

"Oh, didn't Clytie tell you?" stammered Mrs. King, lowering her eyelids and twisting her wet handkerchief between her fingers. "Mr. Crichton wrote to Mr. Grant—they are old friends—that Frank had left him suddenly and gone elsewhere."

"To another estate?" faltered Jinny. She had turned quite pale.

"I can't say. You had better ask Mr. Grant," drawled Mrs. King listlessly. Her face flushed.

"It's so warm in here," she stammered. "I feel quite faint. Let us go on to the veranda."

"But—I can't understand. I think I'll go and call upon Mr. Grant—unless you know all about it, mother dear," said Jinny.

"Oh, I know nothing—absolutely nothing," asserted Mrs. King. "Frank never liked me, and that's probably why he did not write to us when your father died."

"Then I'll run up to the Pindar House at once," said the girl eagerly.

When Jinny had gone away to put on a walking dress, her mother drew a long armchair into a shady corner of the veranda and armed herself with a novel and a fan. She used the latter in a listless fashion; the former lay unopened upon her lap whilst she indulged in somewhat anxious thought. The curtain of climbing roses which hung from the little house-roof effectually screened her from the garden. Through an interlacing leaf and blossom tracery she could see its hot, sunny paths and rather untidy parterres against a grey background of eucalyptus bushes and stately blue gums. Among their fallen leaves she descried a hoopoe pecking for ants and grubs; the crest of the handsome bird shimmered like a halo in the hot atmosphere. Deep quiet reigned; had she not felt so worried, the widow could have dozed. Mrs. King had spoken truly when she had affirmed her total ignorance about her nephew's movements, except in so far that he had left Mr. Crichton. Yet, remembering what Clytie had said to her that morning, she felt troubled.

"Well, I have got Frank shunted off the rails, mama," the tyrant had remarked, "and so you needn't bother any more about him!"

And that was all.

"You must tell Jinny," the mother had replied. In

spite of Clytie's assent, the younger sister had been left uninformed of her sweetheart's flitting.

Therefore poor Mrs. King was too much upset to sleep. She loved her girls equally, and their mutual devotion to each other and to herself was a deep cause of thankfulness. Now, alas, she dreaded a rift within the family lute. Oh, what might not the imperious Clytie have done or left undone in this most delicate transaction?

"If Jinny wishes to blame somebody, it shall be me, not Clytie," decided the disturbed lady. "I shall be able to smooth things down because I am on the spot, and we can talk them over."

Well she knew that a quarrel between relatives when distance parts them and they cannot "have it out" face to face, is generally a quite hopeless one to heal; whereas a word or even a look will reconcile present disputants. Absentees are always in the wrong, and absence seldom makes their hearts grow fonder. This decision calmed Mrs. King. Presently she slumbered peacefully.

As Jinny reached the blazing high road she met a post peon, and, being absorbed in thought, would assuredly have passed the native had he not waved a missive almost in her face. She took the letter, and instantly her heart beat quickly. At last Frank had written! The post-mark did not in itself surprise her, although it was Colombo. There are plenty of tea-gardens in Ceylon.

To read her sweetheart's message here in the highway was clearly impossible, so Jinny hurried on through the hot dust till she arrived at Jackal Shola. Here, within the pine trees' shadow, she sat down to rest. Near by, the lake glinted like shining steel between ruddy boles and austere indigo masses of intertwining boughs. A stream tinkled somewhere in the distance where, between this gloomy shola and

the Pindar House, there was a deep, flower-filled, ferny dell. Hardly a stone's cast from Jinny was the railed-in, somewhat neglected cemetery.

Jinny threw off her hat, and tore the letter open; there was an enclosure, and as it fluttered into her lap, she noticed that it was in her mother's handwriting. Frank's letter was very brief and utterly to the point; he wrote from the Galle Face Hotel.

"A girl who can be so mean as to give a man's private affairs away—a girl who can be so sordid as to barter herself to the highest bidder, however old and crazy—is not the sort of girl for me. When this reaches you, I shall be on the high seas, Jinny. I mean to go to China, and start life afresh. I hope, when you marry, you'll be about as happy as you deserve to be. Personally, I'd rather mate with a savage than with you!

"FRANK."

Jinny winced beneath this outburst of virile wrath; a blow seemed struck across her face from an invisible and furious hand; for a moment her physical and mental energies were paralyzed. Then, so to say, she sorted her faculties, and called on memory to come to her assistance. Ah, yes, of course! On the morning after the club dance, she and her mother had had words about Frank. What it all had been about, she could not clearly say, but certainly her mother had known of the boy's peccadilloes, and exposed them ere even Jinny had uttered a single word, and then only in his defense. As to the "barter" business, it contained no meaning, unless it alluded to the fact that she had given her small "third" into her mother's keeping; but then her mother was neither "old," nor was she "crazy."

Her temples throbbed, she shuddered piteously; presently her hand trembled against the letter in her lap, and all at once she remembered the enclosure. Ah, to be sure! *there* was the riddle's answer.

Alas for sorrow! Here was indeed a revelation of heartless perfidy! For a moment a wave of wrath surged across Jinny's soul, blinding her eyes, numbing her affections, revolting her sense of justice. Then, having re-read the letter carefully, she grew calmer. After all, a mother's privileges are sacred. Perhaps her mother had a perfect right to try to dispose of her daughter's future as she pleased. Jinny decided that she was too young to pronounce judgment in such an abstruse matter. Perhaps sheer stupidity made her unable to see the subject from her mother's point of view. It must be remembered how often the cleverer Clytie had told her younger sister that she "had no brains, and was a stupid girl," an accusation never refuted by the kindlier Mrs. King, therefore assumed to be true.

This humiliating meditation over, Jinny read the note again for the third and last time, with more charitable emotions, and now maternal love was, to her initiated and contrite eyes, the letter's palimpsest.

It was dated, had been posted after the conversation between her mother and herself had taken place, and ran thus:—

"Dear Mr. Crichton:

"A mother's natural anxiety and affection prompt me to pen you a somewhat unusual letter—an appeal. My nephew by marriage has conceived a foolish and romantic passion for my daughter Jinny, and I want you to help me to nip this in the bud by dismissing him from your estate; then per-

haps he will go farther away from Pulnaikanal, cease to molest the child and spoil her prospects, which, as I will presently explain to you, are otherwise very good. Were Frank a desirable party I should hesitate before petitioning thus, but I regret to say—and Jinny admits it freely—that he is dishonest. Examine your account-book, compare it with your cash box, and you will agree as to the truth of this sad statement. With regard to Jinny's matrimonial prospects, your old friend Mr. Grant has long paid her great and marked attention. I am about to ask him his intentions, and have no doubt that a marriage will be arranged. Pray, however, do not as yet congratulate your friend. Wait for him first to write and announce his happiness.

"I am, dear Mr. Crichton,

"Yours most sincerely,

"ETTA KING."

Somehow the palimpsest once more grew very dim and distant to Jinny's eyes. She buried her face in her hands, and rocked herself to and fro moaning:

"I will not judge my mother—no, I will not!"

She fought down her rebellious thoughts and fears, clinging almost with desperation to the veil of love she had woven round about her mother; and when the temptation to loathing and disgust had rolled away like smoke from off a well-fought, well-won battle-line, an elementary instinct asserted itself quite suddenly—that of self-preservation.

"Even to please my mother, I could not possibly marry old Mr. Grant," she thought, and then the word "appeal" rose up in golden letters before her eyes.

At first she failed to grasp the meaning of this occult message, then she understood.

"I will go and appeal to Mr. Grant!" she cried.

No sooner was this determined, than without an instant's hesitation she pinned on her hat, concealed the wretched letters in her dress, and set off immediately for the Pindar House.

Mr. Grant's fingers wandered lightly over the keys of his beloved grand piano; he very softly sang a pseudo old English ditty, all about a shepherdess and lambs and roses, a very pretty, dainty little conceit which he had himself composed. His large vaulted drawing-room was well arranged accoustically, and furnished with the elegance of a lady's boudoir. Mr. Grant had been a widower for many years, but little souvenirs of his wife were dropped about the place: a work-basket here, a pretty broderie there, an early Victorian harp and some water-color sketches lent a charming air of femininity to the apartment. Bowls of azalias, and finger glasses full of heliotrope adorned the highly polished occasional tables, and there were valuable specimens of marquetry about the room. French windows communicated with the carefully laid out garden. While Mr. Grant improvised, he gazed through these open portals upon a fair mountain vista framed by accurately pruned rows of pink and red rhododendrons. Perhaps the old gentleman also vistaed his placid past life, and dwelt happily upon the thought of the peaceful present.

"Fair shepherdess, I'll crown thy locks with may," he twittered, and paused, half dreaming, for adown the avenue of rhododendron tripped a maid, gowned in white spotted muslin, swathed round the waist with a soft black silk sash, and wearing a large white hat upon her well-poised head—a hat tied, shepherdess-wise, with velvet strings beneath a curved, dimple-indented chin.

"Ye gods, it's Miss Jinny! I never realized till now how extraordinarily pretty that child is," thought the ex-judge innocently, but with keen appreciation.

He rose and bowed to the damsel, as she stepped into the room through the open window.

"What a delightful surprise! I am highly honored by this visit," cried the old man. "Have you come for a singing lesson, dear Miss Jinny?"

"No," she murmured, and then Grant noted how her color came and went; that she panted slightly, and trembled not a little.

"Sit down, my dear child," said he. Then when she was seated upon the sofa: "Are you in trouble?" he asked in a tone of tender solicitude, and sat down beside her.

Jinny nodded.

"I've come to appeal," she whispered, turning her head away, and thrusting the two letters into his open hand. "Oh, please, please, don't ask my mother to let you marry me," she entreated; "for, you see, I am in love with my cousin, Frank!"

For one fleeting, amazement-flooded moment, the ex-judge fancied that his visitor was demented; the next, he dismissed the notion with scorn, although he almost wished she were, rather than—were such a hideous possibility believable, he could not, would not, credit it—a conscious decoy sent here by her mother to ensnare him. He had had a full experience in his long life-time of Eastern strategy, and Mrs. King's parentage was—well, the less thought or said about that, the better.

"Am I to read these letters?" he inquired, and to himself his voice sounded miles and miles away.

She nodded, but did not speak.

Old Grant rose, and walked off to a short distance. His blood boiled as he first perused the

letters suspecting trickery. Then all at once, quite unexpectedly, his conscience smote him as he remembered the gallant part he had played toward these Kings. Assuredly he had given reason to Mrs. King to write thus, and, after all, she had written in confidence to Crichton; probably Frank—he longed to kick the disgusting cub—had purloined the letter for the sake of incriminating Jinny. Grant had, of course, never imagined that at his age, with his grey hairs and long settled habits, Mrs. King would look upon him as a desirable partner for her little girl; but it was no plot, it was all quite simple, and really, when one came to think of it, perhaps he had compromised Jinny in her mother's eyes.

The idea was very dreadful. Chivalry forbade the repudiation of the notion of intended matrimony; a young girl's feelings are very easily hurt. At once he took a line of least resistance, which also happened to be highly courteous. Returning to the sofa, he sat down by Jinny, and took her hand in his.

"My dear," he said, with graceful gallantry, "had I known that your affections were engaged already, I should never have dreamed of gaining them for myself, as I must confess I have dreamed—an old man's day-dream, Jinny—but now tell me, have I no chance? Can I not try to persuade you to——"

"No! No!" cried Jinny, turning her face fully upon her wooer, and tearing her hand away. "Oh, do, please, give me up!" She wrung her small hands together.

"Nay, do not agitate yourself!" said Grant soothingly. "Your mind being made up there is no more to be said. Let us be friends, Miss Jinny, as heretofore."

"Yes, please," said the girl, with a sigh of profound relief. "And how about the letter? Ought I to show it to my mother?"

Suddenly she felt quite good and dutiful.

"I think not," said the ex-judge sagely. "She might be upset, and Crichton would be angry if he knew about it. No, Miss Jinny, simply tell your dear mother that I dared to propose to you to-day, and that you refused me. Also, may I suggest that we burn these documents? One incriminates your cousin; his own is most offensive. Presently, when he hears from you, he will feel sorry he ever wrote it. Therefore, let us burn them."

A few moments later, when both letters, by the judicious aid of a lighted candle, had been reduced to ashes, Jinny was once more happy and light-hearted. No doubt Frank's wrath would evaporate when he knew that she had no intention of marrying Mr. Grant. She suspected that her lover was still in Ceylon; his threat to go to China was the product of mere fury. Acting upon the altruistic advice of her rejected suitor, Jinny sat down at the late Mrs. Grant's charming davenport, and penned a sweet note to Frank, assuring him of her love and faithfulness. The letter was returned a few days later from the Galle Face Hotel with "gone away, left no address" scrawled across it. Although Jinny's heart sank at this rebuff, she still lived in hope and resigned patience, making a weekly promise to her sad heart that the next mail would certainly bring a line from its lost lover. At last hope was abandoned, but because she was very young, time gradually healed the wounds and bruises of her torn affections.

Thus Clytie failed in her first attempt to get Jinny married well, and married quickly; nevertheless, on hearing in due course that the ineligible Frank had vanished into the *Ewigkeit*, she knew that her strategy had not been a real failure.

"And now I must go home to mother," said Jinny

when her little note was enveloped and sealed. "And thank you very much indeed, Mr. Grant, for all your kindness."

She left the room as she had entered it, by way of the open window, and flitted down the rosy avenue. There she turned back and waved her hand to Grant, who returned the salutation. He sat down again before the piano, and gave a little sigh.

"Of course I never, never dream of marrying again," he said rather pensively. "But, oh, dear me! how nice it would be if Miss Jinny could always hover about among my heliotrope and rhododendrons, or sit in her muslin frock upon my dear wife's sofa: she is so naïve, and so sweetly pretty!" Then once more he warbled:

Fair shepherdess, I'll crown thy locks with may,
And charm thine ears with a gay roundelay,
Sing at thy dear feet the livelong day,
Sweet shepherdess—nay, do not turn away,
But let me whisper all this heart can say,
A humble heart which for thy love doth pray.
Ah—ah! tra-la-la-la,
Ah—ah! tra-la-la-la-la!

"Not half bad for an amateur!" said the little man. He rubbed his hands complacently together, and chuckled.

"I declare I'll have this song printed for private circulation, and I'll dedicate the conceit to Miss Jinny King, and call it 'My Shepherdess'."

Jinny arrived home just in time for tea. Mrs. King greeted the child very nervously, and obviously was ill at ease. She dreaded to hear what means Clytie had taken to get Frank expelled from Crichton's estate. Also she intensely feared a scene with Jinny. Because her younger daughter was never quarrelsome, she dreaded the unknown terrors of such a recrimination actually far more than an appalling row with Clytie.

However, nothing happened to upset her. Jinny made a good tea before imparting the news of Mr. Grant's proposal, and then did it quietly, without emotion, also without looking at her mother.

"Of course, I refused him, mother dear," she concluded, "and I don't think he minded very much. And oh! by the way," she added casually, "I had a line from Frank, who is in Ceylon. He says he thinks of going to China, but I hardly fancy he will."

Lifting her eyes bravely, she saw not indignation but amazement writ large upon her mother's face.

"You mean to say that Mr. Grant proposed to you, Jinny!" she exclaimed. "At his age! Well, really I *am* astonished!"

And assuredly she was; it was the last thing Mrs. King would have expected to take place; almost it shocked her.

"Then you don't mind my refusing him without first consulting you?" asked the perplexed girl.

"Certainly not; I think you did quite right," said her mother. "He's much too old for you."

Jinny left the table, and went into her own room to lie down and rest, for she was very weary. As she removed her hat before the mirror, the girl gazed for a while at her own reflection, and then addressed it:

"Either she is a consummate actress, or she thought I should scold her as Clytie does," observed Jinny. "Poor darling mother! Well, it's an escape for me, my dear, and I shall never let Clytie know about the letter."

Which would certainly have been unnecessary, seeing that Clytie had herself written the epistle.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Dame Poverty gives an individual's destiny an unkind kick, a natural downward tendency in the hapless victim comes into evidence in many cases—out in India, one might say in most, and markedly so where the person's pigment is obtrusive.

If Pulnaikanal realized the Kings' poverty, the Kings themselves did not make any attempt to idealize their obvious financial straits. Advertisements under different headings appeared quite shamelessly in the Madras papers; boarders were canvassed for; water-colors of floral subjects offered at ridiculously low sums; even a sewing-machine and tennis racquets craved purchasers. To save dhoby bills Mrs. King washed her own and Jinny's blouses and handkerchiefs, and revived her failing energies with brandy afterward. They treated their mourning garb with extreme care, wearing it only in the afternoons, and trailed morning and evening about the bungalow like bedraggled moths, in worn white wrappers. Jinny placarded appeals for work as a daily governess on the club notice-board. No stone was indeed left unturned which might conceal rupees or even annas. Dinner became a farce of rice-water or vegetable soup and curry, with no sweets beyond a repast of plantains; tea and dry bread varied by rolls and coffee supported life and flagging spirits in mother and daughter. Afternoon callers soon ceased; they feared to prey upon an impoverished larder. For this Jinny was thankful; so many embroidered cloths and knickknacks had found their way—under Pedro's skilful piloting—into the bazaar, that the drawing-room appeared dismantled,

and her mother's new phase of brandy-nipping worried her extremely.

What added to their mutual distress were Clytie's letters. These were few and far between and desolating. She reported good and, indeed, amazing progress in her studies, but described her surroundings, in depressing language, as sordid in the extreme. Not only did she find London "as cold and dark as one of Dante's hellish mansions," and her bare attic even chillier, but the people among whom she lived and studied might—according to her—have come from the same dismal zone. She admitted living only upon bread and tea.

In perhaps the fifth letter—one marked "private" and addressed to Jinny—was wrapped a small grain of hope—tiny, yet not to be despised. It appeared that a certain David Hamilton, a biologist of no mean repute, with independent, indisputable means, dimly desired to visit the Pulnai Range with a view to writing a monograph upon its flora and its insect life—Clytie said that these two existences were interwoven, but how she did not explain—and, therefore, "I have advised him, if he decides to go to India, to write to you about accommodation. Tell mama to be sure to catch him; he must be made to pay really well if he comes as a boarder. He would make an excellent second husband for mama, and is about her own age, but don't tell her I said so."

Jinny dubbed Hamilton "our mustard-seed," because the biologist inspired her with faith, a faith that never failed her, although in the sixth and succeeding letters they received from Clytie, no mention was made of David.

"I'm certain that he will come," thought Jinny, "and if he marries mother, it will be splendid!"

Remembering the umbrageous exuberance of the Scriptural mustard-tree, she rejoiced in the fictional

future she and Clytie had planned out for their parent. In the land wherein she and her mother dwelt, shades were as a rule grateful and most refreshing.

Ultimately Hamilton did write and make arrangements for his reception, but ere that looked-for event, help came to the impoverished family. Mrs. Bevan, who, with her children Tim and Cathie, lived at Pembarganore—an estate upon a slightly lower level of the ghat than Pulnaikanal—approached Mrs. King with a view to allowing Jinny to be their daily governess. Matters brightened up thereafter. Amateur laundry work, and consequent brandy-nipping were suspended; Pedro was given a brand new turban and when callers once more appeared upon the scene, they found the drawing-room artistically draped and ornamented, and Mrs. King now rather over-blown but handsome in her widow's weeds.

Thus, to Mrs. King's openly expressed surprise, her brainless Jinny's varied talents soon represented the family's largest asset, and, after all old debts were discharged, out of Jinny's earnings, postal orders were from time to time mailed to Clytie. Mrs. King renewed her subscription to the club, and once again added her quantum of gossip to the already over-liberal supply which circulated in the ladies' room.

The daily early morning walk to Pembarganore was very good for Jinny, who was sometimes inclined to be a trifle love-lorn. From the dusty high-road of this high table-land narrowed a zigzag bridle-path conducting to the plains. Pulnaikanal could not be driven up to in a carriage, although these might be carried up the ghat by coolies and used upon the plateau. Chairs or ponies conveyed those

who did not desire to walk the long narrow cross-cuts up the hills.

Grassy slopes—almost without a foothold—wide bands of planted trees, and giant boulders rested upon the shoulders of this stupendous range, whose bare head touched the heavens. Its knees were deeply buried in virgin forest, lapped round with tree ferns, tangled in lianas, ablaze with blossoming shrubs and glorious flowers. A girdle, rich with orange and lemon shrubs, enswathed its noble breast, whence gushed a hundred sparkling rivulets and torrents, or tiny, mossy rills. Here, too, at morn or eventide, or perchance at noonday, the cooled air gave birth to soft, white, fleecy clouds; and hence sprang thunder-storms—armed with sharp spears of lightning—that rolled against the mountain's throbbing heart and rumbled on its breast. Its feet touched a bleak, wind-swept waste of arid, wiry, grassland, whence rolled the red hot plains onward, ever onward into a dim, half-visible and blind horizon of restless, hot, aerial shimmering. In spots and patches the vivid landscape was broken by streaks of emerald; pioneer threads of a future network scheme of irrigation that would, one far-off day, make green the thirsty lips of a parched continent.

Jinny felt a little apprehensive of the first encounter with her Bevan charges. She need not have disturbed herself; the children knew her quite well by sight, and were prepared to be friendliness itself. They met her as she drew near their pretty home, which nestled within a fold of the mountain's fruitful girdle, and was approached by a winding path, bordered by tangerine and lemon shrubs. Now these were full of golden balls, whose scent rested upon the warm, humid atmosphere, whilst their sunny glory was shadowed by, and reflected in, a myriad shining leaves. Butterflies fluttered lazily

over stephanotis blossoms, where hidden sweets, forbidden to all intruders save evening moths, allured and eluded these more dazzling beauties.

Tim, a tall, thin, bare-legged boy with short cropped flaxen hair and grey-blue eyes, who ought to have gone home for his education long ago, only his father was too poor to part with him, was closely followed by the smaller Cathie, who kept to heel like an obedient puppy. Her small brown face could now and again be glimpsed in the shadow of her brother. She had yellow curls and bluer eyes than Tim. Both children wore smocked tussore overalls and sandals. Tim's knickerbockers were fairly matched by Cathie's obvious bloomers. Mrs. Bevan believed in rational dress for children, and liberty garments for herself; she deemed frills quite superfluous even in the tropics, where, as a rule they are absurdly popular.

"Good morning," said Tim gallantly, and handed a spray of stephanotis to the new governess, whilst he pushed the somewhat shy Cathie well into the foreground. "Do you mind if we don't call you 'Miss King'?" he continued archly. "Our last was a Miss King, and such an awful beast!"

"Oh, call me Jinny without any surname," said the girl, and hoped she had not shorn authority of all its dignity by such a meek concession.

"We want to call you Miss Wren," explained little Cathie, as Tim only blushed awkwardly at the idea of a governess not Miss-ed in any way. "You know 'Cock Robin and Jinny Wren are God Almighty's cock and hen,' and the priest who says Mass here twice a week and who teaches Latin and Greek to Tim is named Father Robins. Isn't it funny? He's very small and roundabout; in red vestments he looks just like a bird, and he has a curious hopping walk. So when we knew you were coming, Tim and

I made up our minds to call you Miss Jinny Wren. We agreed it was a sort of compliment to be called God Almighty's hen."

Jinny laughed. "Oh, just call me Miss Jinny," she replied, "or Father Robins might think we were making fun of him."

"Ah, yes. Well, I never thought of that," assented Tim. "You must be here in time for Mass to-morrow; then you can see him in a red chasuble."

"I am not a Catholic," said Jinny; "so perhaps I had better come at the usual hour."

"What is the difference between a raindrop and a hen?" asked Tim, to cover an awkward interval.

"Give it up," said Cathie, "and then I'll tell you."

"I give it up," said Jinny.

"The one lays dust and the other eggs! We invented it; we invent heaps of riddles," laughed the child.

"Come and see the peacocks; they are just outside the chapel. It still wants half an hour to lesson time," suggested Tim.

Each took a hand of the new governess and led her across the lawn to an outbuilding abutting on the northern end of the Bevans' bungalow. The house and grounds belonged to Jesuits, who had a newly-built seminary in Pulnaikanal, and a small mission in and about Pembarganore, and who were glad to let the house, now superseded by the large college, to the Bevans.

"Aren't they splendiferous," cried Cathie, pointing to the now screaming peacocks.

Jinny duly admired the august sweep in grand outspread fan of the slender-bodied creatures' amazing tails.

The chapel door was open. Through it Jinny could see a bedecked and lacy altar, candles and statues, vases full of flowers.

"Would you like to go in?" asked Cathie, noting Jinny's interested eyes.

"Thank you, dear," said Jinny, "and then I must say 'good morning' to your mother before we begin our lessons."

Mrs. Bevan was seated in a cane armchair upon the cool, brick-tiled veranda. She was busy mending a wide strip of handsome lace—part of a vestment. Her needle flew rapidly. Robed in a morning gown of English handmade linen, with her fair hair coiled gracefully behind her head, she looked dainty and very charming. Gracious and charming also was the greeting she gave to Jinny, and the girl thought she had never seen lovelier blue eyes nor a kindlier smile.

"Perhaps you would like lemonade before beginning lessons," she said to Jinny. "There is a glass ready for you in the dining-room." She waved her hand toward a half-open screen.

"Thank you," said Jinny. "I would like lemonade," and made her way into the apartment.

A man whose back was turned to her was breakfasting. Jinny imagined it was Mr. Bevan, but when he rose as she entered and, turning, faced her, Jinny was rather surprised to see Philip Vaughan.

"Well, Miss Jinny, and how is everyone in Pulnainkanal?" he asked pleasantly. "My mother is too scrupulous to write me any gossip, but no doubt I shall hear many things from her when I go up."

"Oh, every one seems much about the same," answered the girl as she sipped her lemonade.

"I was sorry to hear of your father's tragic end," continued Vaughan. "I trust your mother and sister are, however, well?"

"Yes, thank you," answered Jinny. "But Clytie has left us; she went to London shortly after father's death, and is studying to be a woman doctor."

Vaughan raised his eyebrows in astonishment.

"How amazing and how brave of her!" he exclaimed, and silence followed.

Jinny carefully studied Philip's countenance as she slowly finished the lemonade, but whether he regretted Clytie's departure or was merely surprised, she could not discover.

It was now lesson time, so, with a little nod, she turned to leave the room.

"What time do you go home?" asked Vaughan. "May I escort you?"

"I expect the children and I will walk or ride up to the club after tea," answered Jinny. "But you, surely, go up sooner?"

"No," replied Vaughan. "I generally spend the day here when I go up or down the ghat. Being a lazy person I love a rest!"

"Very well. We will go up together then," said Jinny.

As the children worked at the tasks she set before them, Jinny turned matters over in her mind. Perhaps Philip had been serious in his marked attentions to her sister. The fact that he was ignorant of Clytie's departure rather pointed to this conclusion. Had Mrs. Vaughan not suspected and resented her son's intentions, she would have informed him of the matter. Mrs. Vaughan's silence was a hopeful sign. Although Clytie had never told Jinny that she cared for Vaughan, his admiration had obviously pleased her vanity. Perhaps her scorn of love and marriage was a mere pretence—a subterfuge to hide really deeper feelings. Jinny wondered whether this were so. Sighing, she thought of her own love affair with Frank. To this half Eurasian girl who had been taught from her childhood that marriage was the goal of every maiden, it seemed impossible that her sister had never experienced tender senti-

ments. Yet Clytie had always laughed such an idea to scorn when Jinny had advanced it tentatively. Perhaps the very violence of her protests made Jinny now suspicious as to their sincerity. Clytie absent was less of an enigma than Clytie present.

Jinny and the children had tiffin with Mrs. Bevan and Philip Vaughan. Mr. Bevan, who, unlike his wife, was a Protestant, lived permanently in Madras; only at rare intervals did he allow himself a holiday in Pembarganore. It was regarded as an open secret and an assumed fact that her husband's intemperate habits rather than the relaxing atmosphere of the seacoast town were the real reason why Madras did not suit Mrs. Bevan. Bevan had a fairly good practice still, although it was not what it once had been. Those who might have become clients fought shy of a bibulous solicitor, even if old ones winked the eye at such an excusable Eastern weakness. Society pitied pretty Mrs. Bevan; admired her reticence about the trouble; her unswerving loyalty to a husband she could hardly be expected to love or even to respect. Her religion and her children were supposed to be Mrs. Bevan's consolations; people attributed her meekness to her Faith—and then, of course, Roman Catholics are intolerant of divorce, or even separation.

For years the Vaughans and Bevans had been close friends, and Philip had as sincere an affection for poor Jim Bevan—whose only failing lay in the line of least resistance regarding whisky—as had Jim's wife herself. Both pitied, without a shadow of contempt, the amiable, weak-willed tippler.

After all Mrs. Bevan decided that as rain threatened, the children had better remain at home that evening, but Jinny, accompanied by Vaughan, started for Pulnaikanal shortly after four o'clock, both on foot, as the girl preferred that form of exercise to

the jolting pace of a rough mountain pony. As they slowly climbed the zigzag path, Vaughan asked Jinny for many details concerning Clytie's life; how soon she hoped to be a full-fledged lady doctor, and whether she intended to return to India. Jinny concluded that Vaughan certainly was interested in her sister, and resolved to tell Clytie so when she next wrote to London. Clytie might laugh at Jinny's supposition, and declare that Vaughan was nothing at all to her; this would not matter. Laughter and scorn are robbed of their sting when the mocker is so many thousand miles away.

Half way up the ascent to Pulnaikanal the road wound through a small shady shola. Here a rivulet of crystal clearness dashed down the mountain side over small stones and giant boulders, to rest for a moment in a deep pool all overhung with slender plants and interlacing tree fern, ere with a bound it leaped into a dark chasm and was lost to sight. Tall scented balsams, with nectar-glittering, rosy blossoms bordered the still, shimmering expanse of water, and slightly flushed its pallor. As Vaughan and Jinny passed from the sunny pathway into the light and shadow-dappled coppice, a somewhat startling vision met their eyes.

At the head of the pool, where spray thrown up by tiny natural fountains chilled the clammy air, was seated a youth arrayed in scanty but spotless salmon-colored muslin cloths, against whose knees reposed the emaciated, ash-powdered form of a dying Sanyasi. A string of large beads hung round the withered neck of the moribund man, rising and falling with each motion of his bare, palpitating breast. His wooden bowl lay at a little distance from clenched hands which would never grasp it any more; glazed eyes, sweat-matted hoary beard and locks revealed the fact that life's end was very near. A

single ray of sunshine pierced the roof of twisted leafy boughs above his head, and shone upon the plunging waterfall: rainbow-colored spray surrounded the Sadhu and his chela like an aura. They rested within a charmed circle of colored glory, beyond which lay a mysterious twilight.

"How wonderful—and rather dreadful!" said Jinny with a shiver, but Vaughan stepped up to the young native, and bade her follow.

"Why, Velu, what on earth brings you here?" he questioned, and then said to Jinny: "They are from Madura—I know them well."

"The master desired to die upon the very spot where he was born," replied the youth gravely, speaking in excellent English. "Here his mother, a hill woman, brought forth her son; hence he will pass into the new birth, and recommence life's endless cycle, unless perchance his purification is completed."

"Does he suffer?" asked Jinny kindly, as the dying Sanyasi clenched and relaxed his clammy hands.

"No, madam."

A sudden vivid curiosity seized the girl. Stooping, she gazed closely into the countenance of the man whose passing was so imminent, and even as she gazed he expired without a groan or even a sigh.

"He has gone forth," said the disciple.

With a quick gesture he took off one of his muslin cloths, and veiled the face and form of the newly dead.

"Where has he gone?" asked Jinny vaguely. Emotion had her in its grip. Her soul, swayed by an impulse similar to that which she had experienced when she sang church music with old Mr. Grant, cried out and questioned death: "What is the good of you? What is your meaning?" Just

as she had asked the ex-judge of religion: "Why is it? What is it all about?"

The youth looked at the girl with far-seeing, dreamy eyes that seemed utterly unconscious of her face and form, but read her inmost being.

"Back to the center whence he sprang," came the swift answer. "Whence he may perchance spring again, changed and yet changeless. See yon fountain, madam, that spurts from between those mossy boulders; it is like God. A myriad drops are flung into the air, only to return into their fountain head again, and thence arise once more. We in Him—He in us—all are one; one life changeful and ceaseless, various in light and color."

Arising, he laid the Sadhu gently down upon the cool moist breast of mother earth.

Jinny shivered suddenly, and shook from head to foot.

"You will get a chill if you linger here," said Vaughan. "Come, let us hurry on."

Without another word they left the shola. Out in the evening sunshine, the girl turned her face to Vaughan. He saw that she was very pale.

"Is God our center, really? Was that boy right?" she asked, and her voice quivered.

"Yes; I suppose we all agree upon that point," answered Vaughan. "In Him we live and move and have our being."

"Literally?"

"I suppose so. As Blessed Henry Suso puts it: all things which have been made, have and have had their existence in God from everlasting."

"And yet I hardly ever think of God, and I am certain I don't love Him," asserted Jinny. "I love my friends, of course, and my relations—" here her voice shook again as she remembered Frank—"but

the whole center of my existence is my mother—she is my religion.”

“Well, I think mother-worship quite divine,” said Vaughan. “I adore God’s Mother, and I love my own!”

“More than God?”

“Oh, no! He is the hub of our wheel of life, and our dear ones are the spokes which spring from and revolve around that axle. Does that make it plainer?”

“A little,” replied Jinny, “but I have no religious sense, you see. Mr. Grant says it is an acquired emotion. Perhaps it will come to me some day; meanwhile I am content to love and serve my mother. I would lay down my life for her.”

“The level of our spirit of self-sacrifice is the level of our love for God or man,” said Vaughan gravely.

“Ah! Well, once I had a talk with Mr. Grant about religion, and he said it was all the same as love—emotional enjoyment, given to God, of course. I said love meant service rather than mere enjoyment.”

Vaughan nodded. “Quite so,” said he.

“That boy had wonderfully fascinating eyes. I wonder who he is,” continued Jinny.

“Velu lived in Madura until he took up contemplation and became the disciple of that wandering fakir,” answered Vaughan. “He was an orphan, adopted in mere infancy by a merchant.”

“He is not a mere low-caste native, of that I am certain,” retorted Jinny.

“No, probably of East Indian parentage,” answered Vaughan, then dropped the subject, remembering that the girl herself was half Eurasian.

“I should like to have a long, long talk with Velu,” said Jinny wistfully, and then the conversation was directed by Vaughan into more ordinary channels.

CHAPTER VI

JINNY had no time to write a letter to Clytie until the following Sunday, when in the afternoon she scribbled off a long effusion.

"Do get that Hamilton man to come," she wrote. "I am sure mother would be much happier if she were married. Fancy, Mr. Grant proposed to me, and I refused him; so would you, I am sure. He is a hundred thousand years too old for me. By the way, Frank has utterly deserted us, and gone to China! I am terribly offended! He is hateful! Mr. Vaughan asked after you the other day—he was breakfasting with Mrs. Bevan. I had no idea they were such great friends. He calls her 'Constance,' and she calls him 'Philip'; the children call him 'Uncle.' I think he admires your pluck in studying to be a lady doctor, also I am sure he likes you very much."

Jinny laid down her pencil and sighed. The hoopoes were building a nest somewhere among the eucalyptus trees, and all the birds seemed to be mating. Cupid had wounded Jinny, and flown away unheeding; the sore still ached, though it had ceased to bleed. Unguents were needed to soothe and salve such a painful spot, and these Love, the divine herbalist, could alone supply. Therefore the girl sighed, for she was keenly aware of an aching void which once was filled with sweetness. True, the image of Frank had nearly faded, but its place was now filled by an alluring and dangerously indistinct and beautiful mirage—imaginary love, colored quite innocently, yet very vividly. A girl's nature, once aroused, seldom sleeps again, and such a young

awakened heart is ever hungry. The void was very much in evidence that evening.

"Ah! yes," thought Jinny. "However poor and overworked Clytie may be, she has an absorbing interest in life, and I have—nothing."

Then, remembering her mother, she felt interiorly rebuked, although even that beloved idol failed to allay her soul's keen distress.

"Ah! and now she belongs utterly to me, and I ought to be so thankful," cried the girl's better self. "Mother was always afraid in her heart of hearts of Clytie, and we are all in all to each other."

Then, too, she recalled her gifts for painting and for singing, and as the thought of the latter flashed across her mind, she remembered that she had promised Mr. Grant to be at church in good time before the commencement of the evensong, as he desired her to practise a new solo.

Jinny sprang to her feet, and brushed away all mental cobwebs. In a few minutes she had started for the church. The bell began to ring long before she arrived there; indeed, the congregation were assembled, and Mr. Grant was playing a voluntary when she walked up the aisle.

"You are so late that we cannot run it through—you must sing it at sight," whispered the old man, and indicated a piece of music rolled up in her choir seat. Jinny glanced at the composition while Mr. Blair intoned the opening prayers, and read the lessons.

After an excellent and practical short sermon upon kindness to our neighbor, Mr. Blair informed his flock that the solo, "Abide with me," would follow, and Jinny stood up to sing it.

The girl's voice had developed lately; it was stronger and more rounded, and the timbre had deepened. Expression also had matured, and the

well-known hymn was sung with a pathos and poignancy which surprised old Grant, and were a revelation to him of the girl herself. Tears—the difficult tears of the aged—actually welled into his eyes; he saw the music score through a blurred haze as the words: “In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me,” passed on, and died away into a silence that could be felt.

“She has in her the making of a great singer,” decided Grant, “and I will see that she evolves as God means her to do.”

The congregation had filed out, and Jinny was about to follow in its wake, when the old man touched her arm.

“Will you come home with me and have more music—also tea?” he asked, and Jinny nodded an acceptance.

Mr. Grant and Jinny walked up to the Pindar House almost in silence, such silence as only real friendship warrants, and which tacitly reveals the stability and soundness of that status.

The peace of closing day lay upon lake and hills—that “light at eventide” which never fails within the tropics gleamed red as wine upon floating cloud-lets and slender pine boles, and flushed the still depths near the water’s edge. Within Jackal Shola mysterious shades held conclave, and among the tombs restless and run-wild roses scattered their petals like tears upon the dank disheveled grass which no one ever tended, or lifted pale distraught faces heavenward. Indian cemeteries are generally pictures of untidy misery, often jackal-haunted, jackal-scooped and sculptured. Beyond the shola, the rhododendron avenue was alive with night moths. As Mr. Grant and Jinny entered the garden of the Pindar House, the Angelus sounded from the neighboring Catholic Church; its vibrations hung long

upon the motionless and misty air. A star showed that the sun had already set, and the Ghats' grim forefinger pointed darkly upward.

"It is rather late, isn't it, for visiting?" said Jinny, with a laugh.

"It's never too late for tea," said Grant.

He clapped his hands and shouted "*Bhoy*," and, as if by magic, a turbaned individual instantly sprang into being.

"Tea for two—immediately! Cakes and *heaps* of thin bread and butter."

"Yes—sir." The djinn vanished.

"I don't know how you feel, but I am famished, Jinny," said old Grant. "Go in and sit upon the sofa, whilst I tidy up. You are always as fresh as a newly opened daisy, never needing either soap or water, as, alas, I do."

"Flatterer!" replied Jinny, but all the same she liked the old fellow's compliments—just as she delighted in his drawing-room—both were so dainty.

"I have written a little song, and dedicated it to you," said Grant on his return. "We will run through it after tea. It's called 'My Shepherdess,' and describes yourself."

And Jinny laughed. Though the ex-judge was old, he was quite an amusing and up-to-date admirer. He poured out tea in a graceful fashion, and as he handed a cup, sugared and creamed, to her, she noticed that his small and feminine-looking fingers exhaled a very delicate odor of refined scented soap. The little man was always *soigné*, and very subtly this attracted Jinny; his personality pleased her intensely, and she liked his presence. The void left by Frank was forgotten as she took tea with Mr. Grant; if he could not replace her lover cousin, he certainly consoled. The thin brown bread and home-made butter were delicious, and the cakes were warm

and new. Jinny gave a sigh of satisfaction when the meal was ended. Presently—it must be admitted in rather a bread-and-butter voice—she sang “My Shepherdess” and several other songs to her accompanist.

“Ah! you are tired; we must not overstrain your voice,” said the ex-judge, as she tripped over a tire-some bar.

“No, but it is so dark that I can’t see the music,” said Jinny, and then the old man, who could play by heart, noticed that day had given place to twilight, and night was striding on with giant paces.

“I beg your pardon humbly,” he exclaimed. Striking a match, he lit the piano candles, and then, making a tour round the chamber, ignited every taper, and there were many. “I loathe lamps,” said he.

The apartment twinkled with its many star-like lights. Jinny, who had removed her hat, now prepared to pin it on, and to say good-by.

“I will accompany you home,” said Grant, “but do not hurry. I have something very important to say to you. Sit down, Miss Jinny.”

He indicated an armchair just within the open window, twirled round the piano-stool, and taking a seat, faced her.

“You may not have realized,” said old Grant judicially, “that your voice has expanded quite amazingly, and not your voice only, but your whole being. You have effloresced. Now I tell you, child—and do not interrupt me—that you are meant to be a singer in grand opera. Oh! you need not smile—I know it. But you require training. How old are you? Eighteen? Yes, well that gives us time. I intend to be your patron, to pay for your education, and see you on the boards before I die. It’s no use your refusing. It is settled. I’ll speak to your

mother at once about it, and home you go, Miss Jinny, by the next boat. Not to England—no, but to Munich. I rather think of taking you myself.”

“But, Mr. Grant, it is impossible! I could not leave my mother in any case, and even if I could, it would be horribly improper to travel alone with you!”

The girl’s eyes were bright, her cheeks red as roses. The suggestion of a musical career was tremendously attractive, and her heart beat wildly, although reason told her how utterly impossible it all was.

“Not leave your mother! Nonsense!” cried Mr. Grant. “She has let your sister go home to dree her weird, and why should not you fulfil your destiny?”

“Because she cannot be left all alone; the very fact of Clytie’s going makes it imperative for me to stay.”

“Fudge! I don’t suppose she’d object to your leaving her to get married—come now, would she?”

“I can’t say,” faltered Jinny, “but if I married she could still make her home with me. I wouldn’t marry otherwise.”

“I think I could persuade her,” said Mr. Grant.

“Yes, she might be so unselfish as to let me go, but I wouldn’t be so selfish as to go,” cried Jinny, who felt inclined to weep, so tantalizing and seductive was the old man’s offer.

“I am certain of one thing,” said the ex-judge very slowly. “If I went to her and said: ‘Let me marry Jinny, and take her to Europe to be trained for opera,’ she would not say ‘No.’ She would accept the offer.”

And Jinny bent her head; remembering the letter she assumed her mother had written to Mr. Crichton, she believed it shamefacedly but fully.

“Please, don’t ask her, for I could not marry you,

Mr. Grant," she murmured. "You see, in the first place mother would go all to pieces if she were left alone, and be—oh! most horribly and piteously lonely; and in the second place, although I like you very much indeed, I do not love you. I told you so when you proposed before."

"That is not of the slightest consequence," said the ex-judge airily. "I do not ask for that which you assured me to be impossible for you to give. Ours would be a marriage of convenience and propriety—platonic merely. We will live in Europe altogether perhaps when your voice is played out; few women who have developed so precociously as yourself sing well after forty. Or we might return here to Pulnaikanal. Then you shall entrance my ears with your sweet voice, and my soul with your sweeter presence."

"And how old will you be when I am forty?"

Jinny shivered, for at eighteen, women of forty seem quite, or almost, antediluvian.

"I shall be eighty something," said the ex-judge quietly.

The girl sprang to her feet, and threw up her hands with an imperious yet appealing gesture.

"And I," said she, "am to sing like a caged bird at your command until my feathers all turn grey and moult, and then, forsooth, hop on to your finger, and chirrup for your ears alone? But it's not good enough—not good enough at all, Mr. Grant. I won't be robbed of woman's heritage, a husband's love—real love—and little children, children who can cling at my dear mother's skirts and call her 'Granny.' And I won't be separated from her either. I swore I'd never leave her till she was in her coffin, and by that promise I'll abide. Oh! you are old—old—and do not understand. But I am young!"

She broke down suddenly and uncontrollably into

pitiful and violent sobbing, a tempest of long repressed emotion was let loose at last, her soul and body rode upon the whirlwind, and tossed in the storm. Jinny seldom wept; when she did weep, it was appalling.

"Oh, you splendid creature! How you appeal! How you would sway an audience!" exclaimed Grant huskily. Then, bending down his grizzled head until it nearly touched her own black hair, he whispered, "Jinny, perhaps when you are older you will regret your refusal of my offer. The love you crave is but a sweet scented morning-glory, which wilts and dies away ere nightfall, often in pain, anguish, and disillusion. Did you notice that grave in Jackal Shola, where the white roses wept? There rests my wife and her small, still-born babe. Only one year of happiness was ours."

The solemnity of the little man sobered Jinny. She raised her head and wiped away her tears; she felt ashamed.

"Oh, Mr. Grant, I am so sorry for you," she murmured. "And now I will go home, and we will never, never allude to this again."

"Think it all over quietly," urged Mr. Grant. "You would have a great career once you were launched, and I would pay all expenses and send you to Munich with a lady friend, if you would really rather not go with me. Yes, my artistic appreciation of your talents is so intense that I would even do that, Miss Jinny."

The girl looked steadfastly into the kindly eyes of the old judge.

"Suppose I went to Europe with a lady, as you suggest," she said slowly and very gravely. "I would repay you all the money you expended upon me, as soon as I was earning a good income."

"Yes, yes," he interrupted eagerly, thinking she

had given her consent at last, and not in the least chagrined by being set on one side personally. "Yes, of course; well, then, you agree, and I can have you trained?"

"On one condition only."

"Well?"

Jinny stood up, and pinned on her hat. She glanced round the pretty, lighted, dainty room, and then out into the dark, star-illuminated night.

"Mother likes you tremendously. Will you marry mother?" she half whispered.

The question was put with such a charming, childish simplicity that neither amusement nor annoyance was possible to Grant's good nature.

"You do me too much honor by the proposal, which I fear I must decline," he said courteously and archly. "Yet, still I trust, though I must reject the offer of an alliance with Mrs. King, that does not involve your refusal to go to Europe?"

"I am sorry, but it does," answered Jinny. "I could, as I said before, not possibly leave mother all alone."

"Ah, well, I am very, very sorry!" said Mr. Grant.

CHAPTER VII

IN the shola where his master—a celebrated Sanyasi—had breathed his last, Velu now dwelt and tried to carry out in his own life the Sadhu's precepts. A cave, screened from the wind and rain by canvas, served as the youth's shelter, which from time to time he left to visit the Madura temple or to beg for food. Daily he bathed in the cold pool, ate but little and passed his time in contemplation.

On her daily walk to Pembarganore, Jinny would greet the young ascetic, whose pale, pure face attracted her in some inexplicable and powerful fashion. And Jinny's friendly salutation struck some chord of sympathy in the recluse's heart; he wished her well, prayed for her happiness, looked forward to her passing and her smile.

One grey rainy dawn an old man, travel-stained and weary, presented himself at the Sanyasi's dwelling. His head was wrapped in woolen "to keep off the dew," a drab cloth shrouded his emaciated body and his feet were sandaled.

"Master," he bleated out in poignant accents; trouble jarred his voice.

Velu came out at once, but even in the dim twilight his summoner knew this was not the Sadhu he had come to visit.

"Who may you be?" he quavered.

Velu explained the situation, telling this Elayer that the holy man was dead.

"But perhaps I can help you, friend," he added kindly.

Standing like some culprit a foot or so away from the seated Sanyasi, Cochahey—that was the native's

name—recited a gruesome tale. He had a son, an only one, born when he himself was a mere youth, a son who was the apple of his eye, although from childhood sin in its various forms had dogged the fellow's footsteps, the demon of covetousness obsessing him, boy and man. Twice had cupidity incited him to no less a crime than murder, which the father had succeeded in hushing up. The third affair had proved most unlucky. Narayan now lay in jail accused—and rightly—of the foul murder of his young wife Chinamma. Kutty—Cochapey's wife—had bidden her old man consult the holy Sadhu: their son's life must be saved at any cost.

Velu inquired the reason for this latest villainy, and was told that Chinamma had, whilst in a temper, threatened to betray Narayan's second crime—the slaying for a few rupees of an old women—to the constables.

"Therefore he cut her throat," concluded the miserable parent.

Leaning forward upon his knees, Cochapey recited the first of his son's atrocities. Coveting the jewels of a young ayah, twenty-one years ago, when but a lad, Narayan had lured the unfortunate girl into one of the Pulnaikanal sholas close to the very spot where Velu lived, and there done her to death. The babe she fostered—son of an English captain—had been taken to Madura by the murderer, and given to a native.

"He kept the girl's jewels and the babe's costly clothes and corals buried in our hut for many years," said old Cochapey. "Now the police have taken them in charge——"

"You are from Travancore," said Velu.

"Yes; from Trivandrum," answered the old fellow.

"Return thither, I will accompany you," said Velu.

"Upon the way we will devise some plan for your son's salvation."

Cochapey fell upon his face and salaamed in lowly fashion.

"I myself have an idea," he muttered.

"Speak on," said Velu softly.

"I am old, and what were life but misery to me if Narayan be hanged?" asked Cochapey. "At the best I have but a few short years to live and the rope is a painless end in English hands."

"You desire to suffer in Narayan's stead?" whispered Velu, and Cochapey assented with a groan.

"Great is your love. By your renunciation God will reward you," said the young ascetic. "I will tell the magistrate that you confessed you were a murderer to me; that I persuaded you to own the truth, and thus save your son."

Cochapey gave a shudder.

"Rise up," said Velu; "the dawn is breaking, and we must set out."

Shafts of pale primrose touched the morning sky. Below in Pembarganore a peacock screeched; an ape chattered in the tree above Velu's cave. Nature was waking, night was overpast.

Bowl in hand and beads around his neck the Sadhu left his lair. The old man kept at his heels like a submissive dog.

Father Robins was breakfasting on Mrs. Bevan's front veranda. Philip Vaughan trod the floor beside him restlessly, for he was ill at ease. This tramping up and down annoyed the priest, but courtesy forbade any sign of vexation. If from time to time he flicked a crumb from his scarlet sashed white soutane, it was a harmless relief to nervous irritation. He was a little roundabout man with

bright brown eyes and an alert expression. His movements were somewhat bird-like.

"Don't worry, Vaughan," said the Jesuit soothingly. "Sit down, and let us thrash the matter out."

He lit a cigarette, offering his case to Philip.

"But it is detestable that anonymous letters should upset my friendship with Constance Bevan," cried Vaughan excitedly. "Why, Father, we have been chums for years and years; such accusations are simply monstrous. Yet they seem to have flicked Bevan and my mother on the raw!"

"Bevan is by nature jealous, and your mother extremely sensitive," said Father Robins. "A truth that is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies. There is a grain of truth in what the writer says, it's that which works the mischief."

"I merely protected Constance, and brought her and the children here when poor Jim was not responsible for his acts," asserted Vaughan. "And I would do the same for any other lady."

"You have stayed here rather often in Bevan's absence; perhaps it was imprudent," suggested Father Robins.

Vaughan threw himself into a cane-chair. As he sat there puffing smoke rings upward, he certainly appeared as if master of the house; books, guns, whips of his littered the bungalow; evidences of his presence were everywhere.

"Jim never objected," he remarked presently, but his brow was thoughtful. "Well, something must be done to stop these letters, Father. Constance is upset."

"You've no idea who sent them?"

"Ostensibly they are from Bombay," said Vaughan slowly. "If Jinny King were not such a dear little girl, I might have imagined her at the bottom of the business. Perhaps we had better say no more at

present. I see her coming up the drive with Tim and Cathie."

Philip's *bhoy* appeared, carrying a telegram upon a salver. Without a word, he presented it to his master, standing at attention whilst waiting for the answer which Vaughan very quickly scribbled.

"Graham, the Chief of the Police in Travancore, died yesterday quite suddenly, and I am loaned temporarily to Trivandrum," explained Vaughan, when the servant had departed.

"Will it be for long?" asked Father Robins.

"I don't know, but any way I must be off at once," said Vaughan rising.

The priest rose also. As he threw away the stump of his cigarette, he gave a sigh, almost of relief.

"Perhaps you think my departure providential?" remarked Philip shrewdly. His observation met with no reply. Father Robins held out one hand to Jinny, who now approached; the children clasped the other.

"Such a terribly exciting thing has happened!" cried Jinny.

The color came and went quickly in her cheeks: she was eager to tell her news immediately.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, facing the policeman, "perhaps you have heard about it, Mr. Vaughan? It concerns my brother, that little baby boy that mother lost. No? Well, let me tell you. Oh! I won't sit down. But where is Mrs. Bevan? She must hear it also."

"Mrs. Bevan is not up yet; her ayah says she is not very well, but do tell us your news," replied Father Robins.

"They have found the man who murdered his poor ayah, and all the clothes and trinkets baby had, only a charm was missing, a little moonstone heart which

mother had hung around his neck. Mother has identified them all, and sworn an affidavit; naturally she was dreadfully excited and distressed."

"Has the accused confessed?" asked Vaughan, with interest.

"No, he admits that he lured the girl away and stole her trinkets, but denies he killed her. That is all nonsense, for her rifled body, though not the baby's, was found by the police. Oh, I long to tell Mrs. Bevan! I am so sorry she is not well; she is not feverish, I hope?"

Philip scrutinized the girl's face. The eyes which met his own were as limpid and unembarrassed as a child's.

"Mrs. Bevan had an anonymous letter to-day which much upset her," he said slowly.

"Oh! How horrid! But why should she let herself be made ill by such a trifle?" asked Jinny. "I thought people always burned such letters and forgot them."

"Of course!" agreed Father Robins. "You must cheer up our friend, my dear Miss Jinny."

Vaughan felt relieved. Obviously Jinny King was not a scandal-monger, and he was very glad.

"As Mrs. Bevan is not well, will you be so kind as to put flowers about the altar for Benediction?" asked Father Robins.

"Gladly; thank you for asking me," said Jinny.

She had now been with Mrs. Bevan nearly three months, and dearly loved her kind employer. Gradually, almost unconsciously, she had adopted some of Mrs. Bevan's Catholic views and customs. Quite early the beauty of Benediction thrilled her heart and soul; soon she found strength and consolation in the rosary. Father Robins perceived that God was drawing the girl quietly and by easy stages to Himself. He left it to the Holy Spirit to work in

peace and silence; friendship and wordless sympathy were all he offered.

"I like the Catholic Church; it is kind and homely, making me love motherhood and my own mother more than ever," said Jinny to Constance Bevan on one occasion. Mrs. Bevan smiled, gave her a crucifix and prayer-book, and had Masses offered up for Jinny King's conversion.

"You Catholics have a Center to your worship—we have none," Jinny had added, some weeks later. "The center of my being seems to be slowly shifting toward your Center: God in the Blessed Sacrament. I suppose religion has begun to grow in me at last."

Thereafter she was silent, veiling the efflorescence of her soul from human eyes.

The Sanyasi and Cochapey halted at Madura on their way south. Velu wished to visit his foster-father; a poor merchant who kept a market stall in the main street which conducted to the temple.

The travelers entered the city as the sun was setting. Coconut oil lamps twinkled in the low booths which lined the road. Natives were busily shopping, chaffering with shrill voices and eager nervous gestures; the road swarmed with people. Noting the Sanyasi, many threw coins into his begging bowl; nobody paid any attention to the Elaver. The end of the road was spanned by an arch leading to the temple courts; there, also, buyers and sellers mingled, talk hummed in the air.

The merchant made a salaam when he saw his foster-son; the two conversed together for a brief space. Perceiving that Velu had adopted the rigorous life of a Sadhu, the old shopkeeper realized that this visit was a greeting and a farewell. Most likely they never would meet on earth again. With

trembling fingers he placed a rouleau of rupees in Velu's hand, begging the young man's blessing and his prayers. Finally, he drew a silken string from his bosom, and gave it to the ascetic.

"Wear this, my son," said he. "It runs through a small amulet that hung about thy throat in infancy. The cord I long since lengthened."

The Sanyasi threw the string round his neck, concealed the money in his muslin clothes, and beckoning to Cochapey, passed onward toward the temple without another word.

"Master, I must remain outside," said the Elaver when they reached the courtyard, and Velu nodded. The low caste may not enter Shiva's temple unless he be a Sadhu.

The Sanyasi walked up the temple steps, and down a long stone gallery toward the golden flag staff, where stands an image of the dancing Shiva. Monstrous works of sculpture, rearing and prancing horses cut in grey granite, blackish with age and dirt, stood in the gloomy passage. Smears of red paint and greasy oil-lamp drippings were daubed upon the figures. Velu passed them by impatiently; pressing onward beyond the flag staff he gained a dark gallery whence, through a narrow opening—a tunnel shared in common by a veritable honeycomb of pitch-black, obscure chambers—he could see a far distant, dimly lighted shrine, where stood the image to which he had come to bid farewell. Sanyasis own no petty gods.

About this place and in the galleries were prostrate worshippers; priests passed to and fro among them with metal trays, collecting alms. Somewhere in the gloom the temple band was playing: a reek of sandalwood oppressed the atmosphere. Groups of Hindus shuffled about near Velu, and spoke in guttural whispers. In the obscurity their thin, ash-

smearred forms resembled those of skeletons or spectres, rather than human beings.

The darkness deepened. From some invisible recess a whispered conversation reached the Sadhu's ears.

"Thannu Pillai's fosterling, that fellow Velu, called upon the old shopkeeper to-day. I saw him throw some charm around the young man's neck, and give him rupees. Velu now poses as a Sanyasi, mark you."

"Why say you that he 'poses,' brother?"

"Because he is too modern in his methods, and does but act a part. Besides, one cannot graft a mango tree upon an apple."

"What mean you?"

"Whence sprang this Velu, brother?"

"I cannot say."

"I can, but will not tell thee yet awhile. A secret is a valuable jewel."

"I'll buy it of you. I have use for secrets."

"Verily, I believe thee. Thy master Vaughan is a good customer."

The two thin voices jangled as they bartered for the possession, one against the other. Velu's heart beat quickly as he held his breath, fearful lest he lose any of the faint whisperings. Rupees tinkled, the bargain was concluded, a coin fell upon the temple floor.

A priest sprang forward; his greedy ears had caught the chink of metal. "Alms for the shrine!" he pleaded, but obtained no offering, nor any answer. Fearful of discovery and extortion the conspirators sped silently away.

The Sanyasi rose from his knees, and departed from the temple. The moon had risen when he reached the precincts where waited Cochahey, half concealed in a black pool of shadow, cast by some

monstrous obscene image upon the mud floor of this outer courtyard.

An Englishman, accompanied by his servant, passed the spot; evidently they had visited the temple. The Elaver placed his hand upon the shoulder of a passing woman.

"Is that not Mr. Vaughan of the police?" he quavered anxiously.

"Yonder sahib? Yes, certainly," replied the woman. "He goes on to Trivandrum, because their Chief is dead. I had the news from my son yesterday—he is a post peon."

Cochapey gave a low cry. Before the Sanyasi, who had overheard his question and its answer, could have stopped him, the old man had thrown himself right across Vaughan's path.

"Master!" with clasped arms and uplifted face he shrieked: "My son, Narayan, lies in Trivandrum jail, accused of the murder of his wife. Master, I myself committed that dread crime; it was for purposes of witchcraft!"

Instantly a big crowd collected; humanity hummed and buzzed excitedly about the wretched Elaver. The Sanyasi stood outside the pushing, jostling throng, seeing nothing of what went on inside it.

When the seething mass thinned out before dispersing, Cochapey and the police officers had disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII

NOVEMBER was a depressing month in Pulnaikanal. Clouds camped above the lake, white mist wraiths blotted out the landscape. Old Thamburan Tholan, the boatman, was kept busy ferrying sahibs and their ladies from various landing stages across the swollen waters to the club. In many places paths were deep under water, roads soaked and muddy. The changeless sodden verdure of umbrageous evergreens, nature's unsympathetic children, added a subtle poignancy to the prevailing, all-pervading melancholy.

As Jinny crossed the club compound she stumbled against two oil-skinned figures—Mr. and Mrs. Blair.

"I beg your pardon. The fog is so thick that I didn't see you," exclaimed Jinny.

"How lucky to find you alone!" exclaimed the parson's wife. "I badly want to have a talk with you."

"Let us seek refuge in some corner of the veranda where we shall be undisturbed," added her husband. "And come with us, Miss Jinny."

"Now do tell us, how is your sister?" said Mrs. Blair when they were seated, sipping vermuth which Mr. Blair had ordered.

"Very well," replied Jinny, "although she has worked frightfully hard since she left home six months ago. We miss her dreadfully, and she won't be back for another three years and a half, you know."

"Poor girl!" sighed Mrs. Blair, and added softly: "Has she got over her little *affaire du coeur*?"

Jinny raised her eyebrows.

"Please explain," she said.

"Oh, Philip Vaughan, you know. We all expected an engagement."

"I'm sorry for your disappointment," observed Jinny pertly. "Personally, I know nothing at all about the matter."

Mr. Blair gave a slight cough and observed: "The gossip was quite harmless. One wishes the same could be said of other rumors about Philip Vaughan."

"That he's gone to Trivandrum? There's no harm in that, is there?" persisted Jinny.

"Who caused him to be sent there? Was it Mr. Bevan?" murmured Mrs. Blair, placing a hand on Jinny's. "Ah, you are too loyal, of course, to confess the truth, and we thoroughly admire your reticence. You are in Mrs. Bevan's service and true to her salt, but my husband thinks you really ought to leave there. You have your own reputation to consider——"

"And your soul," the parson interrupted. "I hear she hopes to make a papist of you."

He drew his chair quite close to Jinny's; his manner was impressive.

"I noticed a rosary in your hands last Sunday. Child, beware!"

"I am glad you have spoken about it, Mr. Blair," retorted Jinny frankly. "It's true I hope to be a Catholic some day, but Mrs. Bevan hasn't influenced me. And oh, Mr. Blair, there's not a scrap of truth in all the tales you may have heard against her. She is as good as gold! The anonymous letters which seem to have been scattered all about Pulnaikanal have made her wretched."

"There's no smoke without fire!" staccatoed Mrs. Blair.

"I will send you some books exposing Romish errors," said the parson stiffly. "Pray what should we do without you in the choir if you seceded?"

"What does your mother say about it—and your cousin, Frank?" exclaimed his wife.

Poor Jinny blushed quite vividly. Her eyes swam and were lowered under the searching scrutiny of Mrs. Blair. She loathed the inquisitor's kindly hand-squeeze; it was most expressive and conveyed a wealth of shrewd understanding.

"I see—poor child—ah, well, that explains matters fully," cooed the parson's wife. "But wait until 'Mr. Right' appears upon the scene. You'll forget all about religion *then*, my dear!"

"Blair! Mrs. Blair and Jinny! What the dickens are you doing here behind the scenes? You look like much-bedraggled, chilled conspirators! Come into the club at once and warm yourselves!"

How welcome was the voice of Mr. Grant! Jinny rose up with young alacrity, her tormentors much more slowly. They left the fog and entered the cozy lighted club-house.

"I always told you Jinny was crossed in love as well as Clytie," whispered Mrs. Blair to her fond husband, as they followed the judge into the billiard room and left her.

The parson paid no heed to this wifely triumph; his depression was so marked that Grant observed it and asked the reason.

"We may as well give up musical services at once," was the worried answer. "Miss King is shortly to be a Roman!"

Grant emitted a long-drawn whistle. "Phew! Has she told you so?"

"She has," said Mr. Blair. "Can you prevent it?"

"I'll try to," answered Grant.

Greatly would the club gossips have appreciated the scene which was enacted down in Pembarganore that evening.

Despite rain and dripping branches, through the mist and fog went Mrs. Vaughan to "have it out" with Constance Bevan.

Carried by bearers in a covered doolie, swathed like an ancient Egyptian queen, the leading lady of Pulnaikanal fearlessly braved the elements, for duty summoned her.

The visitor found Mrs. Bevan in her pretty, decorative drawing-room. A wood fire, which crackled on the hearth, was the sole illuminant of the room. Within the warm, cheery circle of its glow Cathie and Tim were acting the story of a great saint with their loved mother. It was the children's hour which precedes bed time in most happy families. The brother and sister played a favorite game.

"To-night we will do St. Francis Xavier," said young Tim, "and how he lost his crucifix when he was boating on the sea near Goa. What will you be, mummy—and you, Cathie? Oh, I say, mummy—here comes Mrs. Vaughan."

"Don't let me interrupt, I beg you!" exclaimed the latter. "I must not be an interloper. Sit down, Constance. Go on with your game, dear children. Presently, I will have a talk with mother."

Even in the firelight Mrs. Bevan's sudden pallor showed rather plainly. Her fingers shook as she unfastened her guest's cloak. Beneath a thin white silk gown her bosom rose and fell as her heart beat far too quickly; agitation showed clearly in her voice and manner.

"Go on with your game, my dears," said Mrs. Vaughan again. Seating herself in a low armchair she sighed and closed her eyes. Ah, what a guilty air her poor friend wore!

"I will be St. Francis," declared young Tim.

"I'll be the tiny crab who found the lost crucifix,"

said Cathie. She stood at a little distance, over against her mother.

"Then I must be the Indian Ocean," remarked Mrs. Bevan. She gave a nervous laugh.

For an instant Cathie stared at the speaker across the space where colored shadows flickered and light waged war with darkness. Then with a cry she bridged the gulf and threw herself upon her mother's breast.

"Oh, no, my darling mummy, no!" she panted. "The sea is a too dreadful part for *you* to play; it swallowed up the holy crucifix!"

"Quite right, my little dear," said Mrs. Vaughan, speaking deliberately and rather slowly. "Mother can never be allowed to wreck the symbol of our Faith and hurt a good man's soul."

For a while Cathie was pressed quite closely to her mother's bosom. Then she and her brother were told to say good night to "Granny Vaughan" and run away to ayah.

"And now," said Mrs. Bevan very proudly, "please explain the parable, Mrs. Vaughan."

She sat stiff and erect; her hands were clasped together in her lap; the firelight showed coldly set features and hard dry eyes.

For a moment the old lady hesitated, then she held out her arms with a low cry.

"Constance!"—the name rang on a broken note and died away in piteous tenderness.

That call from across long years of well-tryed friendship, that appeal from old age to youth, was irresistible. The young wife fell on her knees beside the widow's chair, with strangled sobs and tears burying her face upon a kindly lap.

"I am right, am I not?" said Mrs. Vaughan. "You do love Philip?"

And Constance nodded.

"Believe me, I never knew it until those letters came," she moaned. "They bared my soul and conscience, and showed me the truth. But it is a holy affection, my dear, dear old friend. He is my knight, my St. George—a champion, not a lover."

"Unfortunately he loves you; though he is too blind to realize it, dear," sighed Mrs. Vaughan. "Well, you must never have him here again. Count upon me to arrange matters smoothly. I will not open his eyes, or hurt his feelings."

Mrs. Bevan sighed.

"Oh, it is so hard!" she faltered. "Very hard on both me and Philip. Our friendship is so precious."

"'Tis a mercy your eyes are at last unbandaged," said Mrs. Vaughan rather brusquely. "A game of blind man's buff may lead to knocks and nasty bruises, dear, even to headlong and breakneck falls. Now wrap my cloak around me, like a good girl, and see to my doolie. By the way, when do you expect your husband from Madras?"

"To-morrow," faltered Mrs. Bevan. "I fear Jim has been very ill again."

"Well, do your best for him, and cheer him up." ("Illness" she well knew was a polite and evasive synonym for a drinking bout.) "Grasp at renunciation as you would a nettle. Give up a friendship which must otherwise prove fatal to you and Philip, and devote yourself to Jim instead."

Interference in the affairs of others being the spice of social life in India, it is not surprising to note that after playing billiards for a short time with Mr. Blair, Grant—pleading a headache—left the club, and shortly afterward presented himself at Mrs. King's bungalow.

Pedro said that the mistress was at home and

ushered the visitor into the drawing-room, where Mrs. King was writing letters. Seeing the ex-judge, she rose, and fluttered eagerly toward him.

"Oh, Mr. Grant, I was simply dying to see you!" she exclaimed. "I badly want some advice about my Jinny."

"Precisely," said old Grant, and bowed politely. "Mental telepathy gave me a headache and drew me to you! I, too, feel very anxious about Miss Jinny."

"Because of the scandal? But is there any truth in it?" asked Mrs. King.

"No, none whatever. But I want your little girl to become a singer, not a saint. She confided her little love affair to me some time ago—so sweet of the dear child! The Church of Rome is a well-known refuge for love-lorn maidens. Unless we are quick enough to prevent it, Jinny will try to take the veil."

"You don't say so! Jinny can turn Catholic if she likes, but I will never allow her to be a nun."

"I want her to go to Europe, and study singing. I will pay for the cultivation of her voice, and find a traveling companion for the child," said Mr. Grant.

"So you wish to separate me from both my children, do you?" she cried sadly. "No; it is kind of you to make such a generous offer, but Jinny knows I will never be parted from her. Besides, I want her to get married. That would drive all this religious nonsense out of her head, and I think, with a little care, it can be managed." Taking a letter from her davenport, she handed it to the judge. "Read it. I have answered it in the affirmative," she continued. "It is from a Mr. David Hamilton, a friend of Clytie's, who wishes to come to us as a paying guest. He is rich, and might prove a suitable party for Jinny."

Then suddenly she blushed furiously, remember-

ing that Grant had himself proposed not very long ago. The old man noticed her confusion, and swiftly met it.

"I wish Miss Jinny would marry me," he said, "but I am far too old and unattractive."

Remembering the duplicity of the Crichton letter, he could have detested Mrs. King's barefaced scheming, only he really was far too good-natured to bear malice.

"The letter is written from Colombo; no doubt Mr. Hamilton will be here next week," he said, and added: "But do reconsider my offer. Jinny's voice is splendid—well worth training."

Mrs. King shook her head.

"I must decline the idea absolutely," said she; "especially as Mr. Hamilton is coming. I could hardly keep house alone with him, could I? I almost think Jinny should leave the Bevans'; do you advise me to give Mrs. Bevan a month's notice?"

"Yes, I do," said Grant decidedly.

He was determined to lift the girl out of the atmosphere of Pembarganore; it was far too devotional for Jinny.

"It shall be done immediately," said the mother.

CHAPTER IX

DARKNESS which can be felt broods in warm moonless nights within the sweltering, sullen plains and valleys of the tropics. Nature and man shudder with restless, intermittent fever; trees drop languidly under the thrall of greedy, parasitic creepers and die a miserable death by strangulation. Not a breath of wind relieves the dread oppression. If the jungle rustles, it is with forest creature, not with zephyrs. When travelers tread its dangerous paths by night, torches or fires are lighted to keep wild life at bay.

On such a night an Englishman who had newly arrived in India was borne by coolies from the tope—malarious swampy groves which fringe the lowest slope of Ghat—onward and upward at a good trotting pace to Pembarganore and Pulnaikanal. His servant, Iyerswamy, rode behind upon a tat; a motley crowd of men and women followed, bearing boxes and bundles of all sorts, the traveler's luggage, upon their heads. The Englishman was of the Saxon type, blue-eyed and curly-headed, with a yellow beard; vigorous, athletic, and in the prime of life. He carried a loaded shot-gun, and even in the darkness his eyes seemed on the lookout for adventure and excitement.

Quite silently the procession wended its way upward and so, as it would seem, into the day-dawn. At an abrupt angle of the road the coolies stopped as though to greet the morning. Darkness rolled suddenly from off the world. Tip after tip of mountain caught fire from the rising luminary. The sky flushed with a myriad opalescent hues. Upon a dazzling oriflamme of blue and gold-edged scarlet was blazoned forth the sun. Cicadas chirruped

cheerily and birds broke into song; an orchestra of many living instruments filled the vibrating air with melody.

Far, far beneath the traveler rolled the red plains of Ind, around him pointed rocks grappled with trees and shrubs, above him zigzagged the path to Pulnaikanal outlined against the sky, cloud-wreathed, mysterious. Cold winds blew in his face refreshingly. The bearers broke into joyous savage chanting as, after a brief pause, they hurried on.

Outside the Bevans' bungalow stood a small girl, fair, shock-headed, clad in a white flannel nightdress. Her dew-bedabbled feet were cold and bare. She watched the sunrise with sleep-laden eyes and marveled at its beauty. Tiny cloudlets were being woven by the sunbeams and puffed up the mountain side by playful breezes. Cathie had once asked ayah whence the great cloud-caps sprang that often enveloped Pulnaikanal.

"They come from the steam which rises when the tigers boil their rice for curry, missie."

This answer pleased the child. Her imagination, fed upon tales of beneficent fairies, saints and angels, vividly visualized the tigers at their homely task. Fearless and loving, her heart warmed to all creatures; her soul was in the golden age of innocence; why should not the lion and the lamb lie down together, and tigers stir a cauldron?

Therefore, she had come out to seek and find their kitchen; it could not be very far away.

It was not the flower season, but dewdrops hung like diamonds upon every leaf and the earth odor that arose from moss and fern was very sweet.

Cathie crossed the path and paused before taking such a bold step as entering the jungle. As his bearers rounded Pembarganore Shola, our traveler saw the little girl. Sunbeams glinted in her flaxen

hair, turning it into gold; they also gleamed upon the tawny rosetted fur and bloodshot eyes of a lithe creature that lay, crouched ready for an immediate spring, a foot or so away from Cathie. Without a second's hesitation a gun was raised and fired. At the same moment a white, red-girdled figure rushed into view and seized the little maiden in its arms.

"A guardian angel, as I am a sinner! All the same, my shot was needed!" exclaimed the traveler.

Running forward, he dragged the body of a panther from the undergrowth. Excited comments, astonishment, and admiration burst from the coolies in guttural torrents. Father Robins wrung the stranger by the hand.

"What an escape for the dear child!" he gasped. "I saw the panther at the same moment as yourself."

"You were a brave man to come between it and the girl," replied the other. "It's my first bag as wild beasts go, so I'll flay off the pelt."

He turned the creature over with his foot, and with a pocket-knife ripped up the soft velvety skin.

But Cathie, who had clung to Father Robins without a word, astonished at the swift, amazing succession of events, now left the priest, and flew to her rescuer.

"Oh! you cruel, cruel man," she panted, "to kill that *little* tiger! Look at his handi-pandies, and his lovely yellow tummy! Oh, I hate you!"

Laughter added fuel to her fiery wrath.

"He was going to cook his breakfast," she gasped, then stamped her little feet and sobbed aloud at such a tragedy.

"I think he'd have eaten you raw, my little dear," observed the sportsman. Quickly he skinned the brute, cleansing his hands in a rivulet near by.

"I am just going in here to say Mass; the chapel

is part of Mr. Bevan's house, and this little girl is Cathie Bevan," explained the priest. "In the names of Mr. and Mrs. Bevan I invite you to breakfast. I know they will wish to thank you personally for your timely rescue."

"Thanks, I'd be glad to come," nodded the stranger. "My name is David Hamilton; I dare say the little woman will present my card."

After giving his servant some instructions, Hamilton accompanied Father Robins and Cathie to the Bevans' bungalow. Cathie still glared with wet and angry eyes at the panther slayer, against whom, in her heart of hearts, she vowed dire vengeance. She found her father on the veranda, and presented Hamilton's card without a word.

"Good Lord, child, I'm not up yet! And why, in the name of wonder, are you out and about in your nightgown?" drawled the lawyer.

"He shot a tiny tiger that was looking at me; he is a wicked man!" said Cathie. "He has a beard just like a Mussulman, only it is not black, but yellow."

Bevan laughed, and shook hands with the stranger.

"Thanks. You'll stay to breakfast, won't you?" he said, uncomfortably conscious of his sleeping suit, and unshaven, unwashed appearance. A glass containing whisky and soda trembled in his left hand; his eyes were bleary. Hamilton pitied the man, who seemed all to pieces, stooped rather badly, and was ashen grey and shaky. Bevan noticed this compassionate look, and resented it.

"I'll go and tidy up. I've had a bad night," he faltered. "Run away, Cathie, and get dressed at once! Sit down, Mr. Hamilton, and have a drink."

Hamilton declined, but accepted a cigar and a long armchair, where he could await the breakfast hour, and the arrival of his hostess. He thought the

bungalow and garden charming, and imagined how beautiful the orange shrubs would be when in blossom. He noticed the chapel opposite; the Jesuit had gone in there to say his Mass.

Half an hour or so later, Mrs. Bevan and Jinny King, accompanied by Tim, who had served Mass that morning, came through the open door, and strolled across the garden toward the bungalow. Jinny had her arm round Mrs. Bevan's slender waist; Tim held his mother's hand.

Hamilton gazed delightedly at the group; he thought he had never seen a prettier pair of women, or a more charming contrast. Both appeared young and girlish, each acted as a delightful foil to the other's beauty. The one, dark with lovely olive tints, suggested Italy; the other, fair as a primrose blossom, breathed of England. After all, Hamilton decided, the dusky maiden deserved the golden apple. Rising, he bowed, and briefly—Bevan being still absent—explained the episode of the panther, and his own resultant presence.

Mrs. Bevan took both his hands in hers, and pressed them.

"Oh! how can I thank you?" she cried with trembling lips and dewy eyes.

"Cathie's a little fool, and wants a spanking!" observed Tim, and added: "I should like to see the panther. Did you skin it? Yes? Well, perhaps some day you'll take me shikarring."

"Gladly," assented Hamilton.

"I can shoot, mind you," said the child. "What is your name? Are you going up to Pulnaikanal?"

"My name is David Hamilton, and I am going to stay in Pulnaikanal with people named King," was the unexpected answer.

Tim's eyes expanded.

"How jolly! Well, this is Jinny Wren."

He laughed, and allowed his mother to complete the introduction properly.

"Mother has everything in readiness for your arrival," said Jinny shyly, then added eagerly: "And how is Clytie? Do tell us all about her, please."

"I am sure Mr. Hamilton is ready for his breakfast," observed Mrs. Bevan smiling. "Let us discuss that first, and Clytie later. Ah! there is Jim waiting for us on the veranda, and here is Cathie. Oh, my darling. . . . !"

Straining the child closely to her bosom, she kissed her warmly.

"Never, never, go out again alone!" was the only reproof she uttered.

"He need not have killed the little tiger!"

"Tiger cub, indeed! Why it was a full-grown panther!" cried her brother. "You're an ungrateful person!" Then chanting,

There was a young lady named Cathrin,
Who gave a big panther a broad grin;
He yawned in her face, plunged forward a pace,
And ate up the young lady named Cathrin.

He grasped his sister's hand in his, and rushed her off. The children breakfasted in the nursery.

"If only we could persuade Mr. Hamilton to give us the pelt, we could act the martyrdom of Pancratius," observed Tim thoughtfully, as he discussed his porridge. "I will be the panther, Cathie, and you can be Pancratius."

"I would rather be the panther, thank you," replied the little girl, "and as you are a boy, you ought to be the martyr. I could easily spring on your neck and bite, if I jumped off the table."

Tim eyed his sister thoughtfully; she had strong white teeth. After all, perhaps it would be as well

to let Hamilton take the skin up to Pulnaikanal, and say no more about it.

"But surely you have come here at the wrong season, if you wish to study flowers and beetles?" queried Bevan. "Now they're all dormant, so to speak."

"True, that is why I chose this pseudo-winter. I want to watch my victims as they sleep, to be on the spot at their awakening. The chrysalis awaits the swelling of bud and blossom; at a given moment Nature's children will set to partners and the dance of life begin in earnest. I must be on the floor before the tune is piped, if I would see life's amazing cycle run."

"I delight in sketching flowers and butterflies. I loved botany when I was at school, but I know very little about insect life," said Jinny eagerly.

"She paints most beautifully," said Mrs. Bevan. "Her work is exquisite."

"Ah, so her sister told me!" said Hamilton, and Jinny blushed.

She thought him extremely handsome, and also quite a poet.

"Perhaps you will let me see your work," he added, and Jinny nodded.

As her color swiftly wavered, David decided that she was as lovely as any swaying bloom or butterfly.

"Bees and butterflies, and even beetles, are all flower lovers," he continued. "The shy night-expanding blossom opens her heart to the wooing of the moth; they kiss in the pale moonlight. The bolder and more gaily colored flowers mate with the butterfly. I will lend you a pretty book called 'The Loves of the Plant,' Miss King; it will amuse and interest you, I am sure."

"'Tis love, love, love that makes the world go

round," laughed Bevan harshly. "But sometimes it's best to crush amorous moths and beetles. We get rather too many of them about here, Hamilton."

Mrs. Bevan's teacup trembled in her hands; suddenly her eyes flashed angrily, and she turned quite pale.

"Don't destroy any rare specimens—leave that to me!" smiled the biologist. "I have a killing-bottle."

"Cyanide, eh?" grinned Bevan.

Hamilton saw Mrs. Bevan shudder with ill-concealed disgust. Beckoning Jinny to accompany her, she left the room.

When Hamilton continued his journey to Pulnainkanal, Mrs. Bevan and Jinny bore him company. It was the girl's last day in her dear friend's service; almost it broke her warm heart to part from Constance, although the separation was not a wide one, and they would often meet. This morning was Mrs. Bevan's shopping day, therefore she accompanied Jinny up the ghat.

On the way, Hamilton begged Jinny to tell him the names of various plants and trees. He was surprised and pleased at the extent of the girl's knowledge. What a delightful coadjutor she could be! If her drawings were really good, she might even illustrate the book he meant to write. He asked her whether she had ever had any technical experience in microscopy and section cutting. Jinny modestly confessed that she had a modicum of skill.

"You shall assist me with my *magnum opus*, and I will dedicate the work to you!" cried David blithely, and Jinny felt pleased and proud. Appreciation did not often pass her way—old Grant was her only flatterer—her mother and sister had scorned her mental powers—now it fluttered her heart and

made her cheeks flush warmly. When they arrived in Pulnaikanal she felt as if she had known David Hamilton for years.

Mrs. King greeted her guest with unctuous heartiness, blended with respect, showed him his apartments (Clytie's old quarters) and asked for news about her absent daughter.

Yes, she was well: hard mental work seemed to agree with her, the biologist asserted. She should pass her schools and gain a good diploma. A young native lady who was finishing her education at Oxford—no less a personage than the Ranee of Ancimalei—having met Clytie in London, had taken a great fancy to her.

"I expect she and the Princess will return to the East together," said Hamilton. "It is an open secret that your daughter is to be her court physician. I congratulate you, Mrs. King; you are the mother of two very charming, very clever girls."

"Oh! Jinny is very sweet, but she is not clever," responded Mrs. King. "Clytie has all the brains. I had a boy, but he was murdered when he was a baby. I dare say he would have been even cleverer than Clytie. The man who murdered his ayah, and probably my baby (although his body was never found, but then he was but a mite) is to be hanged next month, down in Trivandrum. The loss of my little son was a dreadful blow, as you may fancy. I have his tiny blood-stained clothes and corals."

David expressed his sympathy. He thought Mrs. King a pleasing, simple-minded woman, handsome in a large sleepy fashion. His apartments pleased him. Certainly he would stay some time in Pulnaikanal.

CHAPTER X

VELU stood upon the shore of the Indian Ocean, and watched with admiration and strange awe the great expanse of heaving waters. Never before had he been near the sea. As wave after wave surged and broke into silvery spindrift, driving the wild salt air against his bosom, hearkening to the language of the incoming tide, he sought to interpret its mysterious meaning. It called—he could not answer.

Beneath his feet lay shells, thick silvery sand, seaweed and bits of driftwood, rubbish that the ocean disdained to keep. How puny and insignificant he himself seemed to be in the presence of this vast immensity. Surely he was as valueless as a broken sea-shell.

Behind him bowed and sighed a forest fringe of palm-trees, dense, dark, and feathery. Trivandrum lay beyond in the murky twilight. Although the sun would not rise for at least an hour, already he could hear the humming of that human hive. Louder and ever louder waxed the sound, now he could discern a thrum of tom-toms blended with the skirling of the serpent. Music throbbed in the air, and feet beat time to it.

He was alone no longer. Men and women of all ages, and little children emerged from out the darkness until the shore swarmed with chattering, gesticulating natives. Booths were hastily constructed out of poles and canvas, trays, formed out of leaves and filled with sweetmeats, were set out upon the shore. A fair or picnic seemed in preparation.

A cart drawn by yoked bullocks clattered to the scene. Men leaped down; some sharp hammer strokes cut through the humid air. Against the blue

and amethystine shades of the sun-expectant heavens uprose a wooden specter, grim and awesome. From its extended arm pointed a crooked iron finger that clawed a dangling rope.

Thereat Velu shuddered; at sunrise he must witness the hanging—nay, rather immolation—of Cochapey! Across the gulf that separates night from morning, eternity and time would clasp hands together for one poor soul at least. Yet, the coarse natives saw in this public execution only an opportunity for gala and an excuse for feasting. Surely death sweats dripped in the sugar of their sweetmeats; ghouls and not human beings rollicked on the sands!

Velu approached the gallows.

"Whom do you execute to-day?" he asked the carpenter.

"An Elaver named Cochapey, self-accused and proved to be the murderer of three women."

"The Sirkar* is merciful; maybe a reprieve will come?" queried Velu.

"Nay, holy youth, there is no chance of that. Government has no pity for those who deal in witchcraft, murdering for purposes connected with foul black magic. But stay, let me find a place for you close to the gallows' foot, where you will see the show to best advantage. Already I can hear horses coming; the old sinner will surely swing ere sunrise."

A whirl of sand that shone like gold dust in the fair blush of daybreak, a rush of human sound, half roar, half groan; the thud, thud, thud, of rapid horses' hoofs, and slower, heavier beat of bullocks' feet; "Halt!"—the criminal and his escort of police had reached their goal at last.

Squatting beneath the shadow of the gibbet, admitted because he was a Sanyasi into the police-

*Government.

protected circle that kept the excited crowd at bay, Velu prepared to see this tragedy of a father's sacrifice to its bitter end.

With handcuffs on his wrists, bare-headed, dingily attired in dirty clothes, old Cochapey was assisted from his seat in the open bullock cart by two prison warders, and led—amid jeers, howls, and execrations from the jostling crowd—up steep steps to the drop.

The face of the aged man was grey with terror, his half-blind eyes were glazed by fear and anguish. Sweat, which his manacled hands were unable to wipe away, stood out in beads upon his tortured brow; his withered limbs trembled with intermittent, violent shudderings.

Yet he bore up with amazing fortitude until the rope was knotted round his neck and he felt the tight clutch of its rough coils. Thereat he broke down, shrieking to the hangman that he was innocent.

"Narayan is the murderer, not I! I appeal to the Sirkar, to the doré Vaughan!" he uttered wildly.

Vaughan, who was present on horseback, spurred his charger close up to the gallows. As he did so, Velu sprang to his feet, fearful of being crushed. Startled by this sudden apparition out of a dark shadow, the animal started, reared and turned. Had Vaughan not been a past master in horsemanship he must have fallen.

"Get out!" he cried savagely to the Sanyasi. "What are you lurking here for?"

"He is not guilty, the poor old man says he is not guilty!" cried the Sadhu. Speech was, as it were, torn out of him. He who had encouraged Cochapey to self-sacrifice now longed with a fierce passion to see justice done.

"Pull the lever and let go the drop!" commanded Vaughan.

Quick to detect the temper of a crowd, he noted that its sympathy had unexpectedly been aroused by the pathetic cries of the old Elaver and by the pleadings of the Sanyasi. Its murmurs had changed from wrath into compassion. Narayan could be seen elbowing his way to the gibbet. He was surrounded by his castemen; a rescue might even be attempted.

"Let go the drop, you fool!" yelled Vaughan to the superintendent of the jail. Obediently the man pulled on the lever. There was a creak, a scuffle, a short, strangled cry, drowned by the deep groaning of the multitude. Like a ball of fire from behind the blue Eastern Ghats uprose the morning sun, flooding the grim scene with vivid radiance.

The crowd dispersed, drifting away in little grumbling, whispering units.

Narayan, boldly stepping forward, claimed the body of his father—he had obtained permission to bury it in his own compound.

Long after all the paraphernalia of justice had been cleared away, Velu sat motionless upon the sand in the same place whence he had watched the execution. Gazing toward the sea, he gave himself up to long, long thoughts. He heeded neither passers-by nor offerings which were thrown into his begging bowl. Nobody spoke to him; bold indeed would that person be who presumed to disturb a Sadhu at contemplation.

The moon showed like a thin silvern sickle above the sea when Velu rose and slowly made his way into the city. His muslin clothes concealed a tiny book which he had discovered half buried in the sand within a charger's hoof prints.

"Narayan, I have a word to say to you."

The Elaver turned and faced the Sanyasi in the moonlit street, a tunnel of feathery palm-trees.

"Speak, Sadhu," said he gruffly.

"Your father has perished in your stead. Amend your life—become a Sanyasi; strive by penance to acquire merit such as shall shorten the long chain of re-births which now lies before you."

Narayan looked steadily at Velu. He made no reply; this call to a virtuous life fell upon deaf ears. To the Sadhu himself he paid very little heed; but there was that in his bowl and also upon his person which gleamed in the bright moonlight. Upon these the murderer's gaze was covetously riveted.

"I know you well, you are no true Sanyasi," he jeered, thrusting his face into Velu's with a rude grimace. "No Sadhu would wear a trinket round his neck, nor spotless raiment. Whence came the moonstone, master? Tell me that!"

He spat in Velu's face, and laughed aloud.

The ascetic bore this insult meekly; wiping his face with his salmon-colored cloth, he continued his slow progress up the shady street.

Something in this indifference maddened Narayan; dogging the Sanyasi's heels like some foul cur, he poured forth oaths and insults in his ear.

"I saw thee when thou wert a babe," he sneered, "a Christian child! Thou art a false Sadhu, no true holy man!"

The venom called forth no answer, no reproof. The Sanyasi made his way to the portico of a small temple, where stood an image of Ganesh, the elephant god. Here he paused and in the pitch black shadow turned at bay.

"Go, liar!" he commanded. "Danger lurks in here!"

Narayan paid no heed. The demon of avarice had him in its grip.

"Hand over all thy money and thy trinket to me, and buy my silence, otherwise I expose thee to the

townfolk at daybreak, and tell them who thou art!" he loudly cried.

"Back! Not an anna will you get from me," answered Velu. "Back, lest you meet a fate you richly merit!"

A short knife gleamed in the vivid moonshine. With an obscene oath Narayan lifted the sharp weapon, and plunged it into the shades which concealed the Sadhu. Sharply the handle wrenched the assassin's wrist as the steel broke in two upon the stone breast of Ganesh. Immediately uprose a hissing sound, two points of living flame pierced Narayan's forearm, a deadly snake loosened its coils from around the idol's head, and writhed rapidly away into the temple. A shriek, a gurgle, a thud, and all was over. Narayan had gone to meet the Eternal Justice.

Nor did the Sanyasi linger upon the fatal spot. Emptying his bowl of coins which had tempted Narayan to murder, he wrapped them in a corner of his cloth, and with them the moonstone which his foster-father had hung around his neck.

Then, stepping across Narayan's body, he continued his journey up the deserted street.

Yet he could not forget, though he forgave, the insults which had been poured upon him. Remembering the conversation he had overheard in the Madura temple, he wondered what in truth the mystery might be by which his life was veiled. He resolved to seek out Vaughan, and learn the truth from him. He liked the policeman, who had often befriended him in little ways.

CHAPTER XI

REPUTED wealthy, handsome in appearance, charming in manner and conversation, David Hamilton took the heart of Pulnaikanal's social world by storm, winning it completely. Everybody envied Mrs. King and Jinny the possession of their charming paying guest.

Jinny's sorrow over her departure from the Bevans' was quickly alleviated. As David's artist and amanuensis her time was fully occupied. He paid her well, appreciated her delicate and careful work, her childlike good temper when correction and even destruction of drawings was insisted on. Indeed, Jinny became so busy that she presently had no time for singing. Not that this mattered much, she thought, as she had ceased to attend the Anglican services. Father Robins had nearly finished her instruction in the Faith, and she would be received into the Church in a few months. Vainly had Mr. Grant tried to dissuade her from taking such a step: Jinny had made up her mind to be a Catholic. Her heart, sorely bruised in its early love-affair with Frank, and half terrified, half repelled by Grant's almost inhuman, though generous, proposals, had surely found rest and peace at last—in God.

This was her position, mentally and spiritually, when Hamilton appeared upon the scene—in spite of absorbing interest in their united work, it yet remained unchanged. The sight of Constance Bevan's unhappy marriage, of Bevan's grossness and thinly-veiled cruelty, had also affected Jinny—wedlock was not the ideal state she had fondly imagined; she rather shunned it now. Her soul was still uplifted on that bright crest of aspiration which generally

accompanies conversion; the discovery of Divine Love still thrilled her being, making her temporarily impervious to lesser attractions, however fascinating.

And Hamilton at first did not make love to her; rather he treated her as a pleasant comrade and engaging child.

Thus matters might have remained at a standstill indefinitely had not fate—jealous of such aloofness from mundane weal and woe—intervened, thus bringing matters to an unexpected crisis, and Jinny, from spiritual mountain tops into more natural plains.

Beyond the slopes that encircled Pulnaikanal stretched moor and jungle land. Here and there, in folds, were marshy places full of sundew and small aquatic flora. A wooded mountain-spur, whence the level country could be gained by a precipitous descent, was a favorite habitat of white sweet-scented orchids, boulder epiphytes that nestled close to scarp and jagged fissures. Here immense blocks of stone, known as the "Pillar Rocks," formed natural giant mountain buttresses. In places where these were cloven, bottomless shafts, half-choked with grass and scrub, yawned like neglected coal-pits, abysmal, black, and awesome. Truly the spot was full of dangers for unwary footsteps.

Thither, upon a cloudlessly clear spring morning came Hamilton and Jinny, accompanied by Iyerswamy, in search of budding orchids and ripening chrysalis. Breezes blew athwart tussocks of flowering grasses; in the bright morning sunshine patches of globuled *drosera* gleamed red as ruby; above iridescent dragon-fly wings flashed illusively as the insects darted hither and thither in search of mate or prey. Nature was wide-awake at last, her life-dance had begun in real earnest.

"The lilies will be here soon," said Jinny. "They are most beautiful. Each lives, as it were, a solitary life upon a single stem. One lily alone would scent a ballroom. When they come out, I will pluck one, and paint it for you."

"You must find me its insect-lover," answered Hamilton. "Some whiskered moth, no doubt, plunders its dainty sweetness."

"A fairy and a gnome," laughed Jinny.

"Titania and the ass," suggested David.

The girl tripped with a swift, light footstep at his side, breezes caught and played with a loosened strand of her dark hair; exercise had flushed her cheek, her parted lips showed dewy as a child's.

"Like does not really mate with like in nature, as you see," continued Hamilton. "Quite the opposite, in fact, is true. And yet such unions seem to turn out well; perhaps because they are temporary only."

Glancing up at the biologist from under the broad brim of her sun hat, Jinny wondered whether he had ever been in love. She doubted. Surely if so, he would have won the love he wooed. He was so sure of himself, so strong and masterful. Suddenly Frank's face swam up from oblivion's depths toward her mental eye. She was amazed to discover how slight her girlish infatuation now appeared, how long ago it seemed, and yet it was but a year since she had fancied herself heartbroken. Was love a temporary, swiftly fleeting emotion, after all? Surely not! That affair with Frank was but a childish episode; the love she had conceived for God had obliterated its significance entirely. Perhaps religion was the *grande passion* after all; it belonged to eternal things, it was steadfast and indestructible, insatiable.

"I think you are wrong," she said. "Love which is really love is for all time, a permanent affair."

"Certainly," responded David, struck by her serious tone, "for human beings. I was alluding to plants and insects only, and marriages of Dame Nature's making."

He thought her little pensive face quite charming; had she been less immature, nearer his own age, he might have lost his heart to this pretty maiden.

"And now for orchids. I presume these are the Pillar Rocks," said he.

As they entered the shola, a procession of hill folk passed them in single file; men and women clad in rough knotted cotton cloths, all under-sized and dark as teak. Carrying honey and fruits, they passed at a swift jogtrot. A woman who brought up the rear was weeping, audibly sobbing as she trotted past. Shyly they avoided the Europeans.

Light flickered like yellow tapers in the shola; interlacing boughs shaded twisted tree trunks and awkward rocks, tall grasses and lianas struggled for mastery. Here and there an early rhododendron blossom flamed in a frame of dark and glossy leaves.

Jinny pushed boldly through underbush and tangle, sure-footed, a rare pathfinder. Hamilton and Iyerswamy followed. In the distance, against a protecting slab of weathered granite, glowed like gold the globular bunched calices of snow-white orchids. Toward these she struggled, eager and impatient. Suddenly the silence of the coppice was broken by a tremulous and whimpering cry, rising into the upper air as from some Stygian cavern, a tiny, echoing plaint, poignant, heart-piercing. It seemed to Jinny as though it sounded from beneath her very feet.

She paused, with a sense of foreboding almost superstitious; did some lost soul haunt this deserted thicket? Then, stumbling against a stone, she caught at a twine-cabled tree creeper, and twisted it backward.

At her feet gaped a deep opening, criss-crossed by projecting rock spars that formed, as it were, a natural staircase adown its gloomy depths. Upon one of these ledges lay the tiny body of a baby, alive but nigh to death.

Without an instant's pause or hesitation, Jinny swung herself by the cabled creeper down into the pit, dropping from ledge to ledge until she reached the one on which the infant lay. Speechless with horror and real admiration, David Hamilton stared into the yawning chasm. He realized that the girl had obeyed that strong call to save the weak which lends heroic courage to all noble souls. Trembling at the consequences, he was silent. Anything which could startle Jinny or make her too self-conscious might cause her feet to stumble. One false step, and she would be engulfed in unfathomable depths, pregnant with unknown horrors.

Dimly he discerned her white-robed figure in the gloom, saw her clutch at the small waif with one outstretched hand, whilst with the other she gripped the frail coil of liana. Then there was a sound of falling rubble; the ledge upon which she barely stood gave way; and with a smothered cry she sank into the earth, bearing the tiny creature to its doom.

"Master!" cried Iyerswamy, shaking Hamilton roughly by the arm, "we must cut master's coat into strips. It is strong, and see, here is my knife. I can make a good knotted rope, and go down to missie. Be quick, or she will slip further; then we can do nothing."

Half stunned with horror, Hamilton suffered his servant to tear off his coat and rip it up. Pale as death, he watched the deft fingers of the native knot a firm band, and tie it to a stout sapling.

"Lie down on the edge, master, then you can catch hold of missie as I hand her up," enjoined the man, and Hamilton obeyed.

Thereafter for a while it seemed to him that time stood still, pausing on leaden feet. Gripping a ledge of granite, he watched Iyerswamy's slow descent into the jaws of earth until only a turbaned head was visible. Silence hung like a horror in the air; it harbored death. David longed for sound, noise, tumult of any sort, rather than this stillness. In imagination he saw Jinny leagues below, crushed like a broken lily, bruised and battered. Iyerswamy would surely never reach her; the surface of the earth would never see her little form again, her lovely flower-face. Never until that moment had she appeared so winsome and so desirable; his heart ached at the thought of the irreparable loss it had sustained. In the face of this shocking, dire calamity he saw the mirrored truth, that he loved Jinny, had loved her at first sight, and—he had lost her. She was more, far more, than a pleasing docile child; she was a woman. Maternal instinct had summoned her to aid the babe so ruthlessly cast away by its own savage mother; this potential motherhood in Jinny flamed David's awakened love into fiery passion, alas—so he believed—too late.

"Master!" Iyerswamy's sepulchral tones struck on David's ears: "I have got the missie tied in your honor's coat. She has only fainted; the baby is dead of smallpox. I have thrown it down for fear of infection."

The Englishman shuddered. The infant had evidently been cast into this natural oubliette by the terrified hill folk. Iyerswamy had given the frail corpse a yet darker and deeper grave. But swiftly as it came, the shudder passed; a wave of jubilation took its place. Jinny was alive, saved from a hideous death, and saved for him! Eagerly he stretched forth his arms to receive her, eagerly he pressed the slight form to himself as Iyerswamy lifted the girl from the ledge on to which she had

fallen, above the edge of what might have been her living tomb. Persephone had returned to earth again, and nature sang about his heart once more.

Guessing the cause of his master's emotion, Iyerswamy discreetly retired to a distance, ostensibly to fetch wine and water for the missie. Jinny opened her eyes to find Hamilton's face close to her own, his arms around her.

"Darling, I thought I had lost you forever. What an escape!" he murmured. In his eyes the girl read a strong man's passion, the hands that clasped her form were tremulous with feeling.

"I love you, darling. Say you love me, too."

She leaned against his shoulder, startled and half dazed, with never a word in answer. Interpreting her silence as he desired, Hamilton held the girl still closer; eagerly he kissed her pallid cheeks.

"Life would have been a perfect blank without you," he murmured softly.

"Where is the little baby," stammered Jinny. "Poor thing! I am afraid I must have dropped it."

Her words brought Hamilton suddenly to his senses.

"You must come and bathe your hands at once," he said. "The child had smallpox. You have run a terrible risk, my own brave darling."

Still clasping her in his embrace, he led her to a wayside rivulet, and, stooping, washed her hands. Presently Iyerswamy brought wine and biscuits, retiring as Hamilton, bidding Jinny sit down, declared he himself would wait upon her.

"I adore you, and I think you care for me, too. This wine is poured out for our love feast, Jinny!" he said warmly. Then, as she still was silent: "You aren't in pain—not hurt, are you, my darling?" he questioned.

"No," answered Jinny. She sipped the wine and

ate a biscuit he had dipped in it. Shyness enthralled her; this wooing was very different from her cousin's: almost she feared it. Indeed, she trembled and drew back as she once more felt Hamilton's arms around her. He caught within his own the little hands that vainly tried to keep him at a distance, his passion woke her heart to a new palpitating life as his lips met her own, demanding their surrender.

Thus Jinny left her lonely spiritual heights to meet a lordly lover in life's valley.

* * * * *

Amazement, delight, a sense of maternal conquest thrilled Mrs. King's heart when Hamilton, on their return from Pillar Rocks, declared his undying love for Jinny, and claimed her hand in speedy marriage. He wanted her at once; surely matters could be so arranged that he could call her wife in a month's time.

This witchery of success lent Jinny a strange new charm in her fond mother's eyes; the paltry duckling changed into a swan. Clytie for once retired into Mrs. King's mental background, for brains are at a discount where love has triumphed.

That night, in the seclusion of her own chamber, Mrs. King warmly embraced Jinny and descanted upon the good fortune of her younger daughter. Hamilton had been transferred to bachelor quarters in the club; propriety was duly considered, and the paying guest had vanished in the prospective bridegroom. With blushes Jinny confessed her youthful peccadilloes to her loved mother, especially her secrecy regarding Cousin Frank. The mother's happy tears cooled the girl's cheeks and salved her conscience. That was but a childish fancy, she reassured her. When half-gods go, the gods arrive. Hamilton was a man, and would make a splendid husband. Frank was still a boy—a calf-lover.

"But do I love David, mother? I am not sure."

"Of course you do!" asserted Mrs. King. "Any girl would love him, he is so good-looking."

"Somehow, I feel afraid of him," faltered Jinny. "He is so big and strong, and rather rough. Are you sure, mother, that I shall be happy if I marry him?"

"Of course! Now don't be silly, Jinny!"

"Couldn't I wait a bit? I am rather young. . . ." said the girl tremulously.

"Nonsense! Besides, I shall be here to look after you. We shall go on as we are, and live all together. You have made me intensely happy, Jinny; don't spoil my happiness by being silly!"

The girl pressed her mother's head against her slender bosom, and kissed her brow.

"Darling, I am glad that you are happy! Now I am sleepy, and will go to bed. My head aches rather badly. I dare say I shall feel all right to-morrow."

When Jinny had left her, Mrs. King lay long awake, too excited to sleep, planning out the future now so prosperous and rosy colored.

The datura outside the King's bungalow was in its glory. Green-veined white trumpet blooms flung out a welcome to every passing zephyr. In bridal raiment of russet brown and gold the hoopoes wooed and mated, an odor of blue-gum filled the air with sweetness. Violets and heliotropes empurpled the parterres. From the window of what once was Clytie's room, and now was Hamilton's study, Jinny could see this vivid outdoor life, yet not partake of it. She was busy setting some moths and other specimens collected in the early morning hours. Presently up the garden path came a white cassocked, red-girdled figure. She knew it was Father Robins, but the priest's face was hidden beneath his large

sun topee. She guessed, of course, the reason of his visit—it was ill-timed, and it annoyed her. She had been irregular in calling at the presbytery for instruction; had avoided asking his advice about her coming marriage—of course, he disapproved of haste, and wished her to postpone it. Now, no doubt, he had come to talk the matter over. And she was very busy—she was always busy now at David's work; at work too fine for the incessant eye-strain which it demanded; work that absorbed her thoughts, her hours, even the hours of prayer which were once so precious; work which comprised the laying out of insect corpses, their description, accurate measurement, and portraiture; work she excelled in, though it tried her nerves—perhaps because it tried them so severely.

She waited an inevitable summons to the drawing-room; it was so long in coming that finally she decided it would not come at all. Mrs. King was victimizing, or being victimized by, Father Robins. Presently, she heard the droning of their voices; words were indistinguishable. To tell the truth, Jinny did not trouble very much about the conversation.

Mrs. King felt nervous in the presence of the Jesuit; he represented an unknown quantity—perhaps terrifying. Therefore, she clutched at some means of propitiation.

"I am a Christian, though perhaps not a very sincere one," said she, deprecatingly. "My girls are inclined to be too serious in every way. In that they resemble their dear, sainted father; his was a strenuous life. Indeed, you may say he died of being too much in earnest, Father."

"An admirable fault," put in the priest.

"And he was a serious Christian," continued the widow. "Indeed, poor Jinny is like him there. Once

I was really afraid that he might turn Roman Catholic. I'll tell you why. Shortly after our first child was born, he took baby and me for a trip to Ceylon. The boy was tiny, indeed we had not then had him christened. Well, he had a bad attack of colic on the boat—I suppose the sea upset the little dear—and my poor husband made up his mind we were going to lose him." Here Mrs. King produced a pocket handkerchief. "There was a priest on board, and poor dad got him to baptize the baby—naming him Vincent. At the time, of course, it shocked me a little, begging your pardon, Father.

My people were Syrian Christians—never Catholics!"

"That was your only son, the baby who was murdered, was it not?" murmured the priest sympathetically.

Mrs. King dabbed her eyes. Her lips trembled, for tears were generally near. "Yes," she replied. "But we never found its little body."

"You have had more than your share of the trials and anxieties of married life and motherhood," said the Jesuit kindly. "You have suffered greatly."

The mother choked down a sob; she twisted her handkerchief between her hands.

"I have, indeed," she sighed. "I was a mere child when I married, no older than my Jinny; and now I am a widow."

"Too young surely to have shouldered such responsibilities," said Father Robins gravely. "And don't you think," he added quickly, "that Jinny is far too young to marry now?"

Mrs. King stiffened visibly.

"Oh, but her case is quite different," she protested. "Mr. Hamilton is wealthy; he can provide her with every comfort. I am going to keep house for them and look after Jinny."

"She is a mere child, immature and not over strong," pleaded the priest. "Surely you will let her wait another year?"

Mrs. King tapped one foot impatiently. She flushed with real annoyance.

"It would be impossible to put it off; Mr. Hamilton would never consent to wait," said she. "A month is what he stipulated, and the banns are up. You speak as if I were forcing marriage upon my daughter, Father. She knows her own mind, and has made her choice."

"Does she? That is the question. Personally I doubt it. Does she understand all that the responsibilities and duties of the married state mean?"

"What girl does? Yet they are always happy; if not just at first, well, after a time," was the reply. "Anyway, I'd rather get her married too soon than let her be a nun," she added spitefully. Her eyes flashed.

"I should like to speak to Miss Jinny, if I may," said Father Robins quietly.

"Why, certainly; but before me, please," drawled Jinny's mother languidly.

He bowed. Mrs. King called to Pedro, and bade him summon Jinny.

"Bother!" said Jinny, but she laid down her setting tools, and went to the drawing-room quite obediently.

"I know I've been lazy about coming to instruction, Father," she said apologetically, greeting the priest with a little nod and smile, "but you'll receive me after I am married, won't you?"

"Yes, if you still wish it."

"Oh, don't be hard upon me, Father. Of course I mean to be a Catholic—some day. And you mustn't be offended because I am going to be married first. Really, it makes matters easier, for, after

all, it saves us from hurting Mr. Blair's feelings, and prevents a lot of bother, Father."

"Perhaps Mr. Hamilton will object to your being received into the Church after your marriage," suggested the priest evenly.

"Oh, no, he is quite agreeable to it. One religion is as good as another to him," asserted Jinny. "You see, he is an agnostic."

"And you have quite made up your mind to marry him?" The priest's calm eyes studied the girl's face closely.

She met his scrutiny without a tremor.

"Yes."

Father Robins rose.

"Good-by," said he. With a courteous inclusive bow to Mrs. King and Jinny, he left the bungalow.

In the road outside old Mr. Grant waited, with much impatience, for the priest.

"Well," he queried, irritably, "what luck?"

"Both are immovable. The marriage is a fixture," said the Jesuit.

The ex-judge threw out his hand with a characteristic gesture.

"What a waste!" he exclaimed petulantly. "And yet we cannot prevent it. I have cabled home to my confidential agent, and even he can't find a rag of scandal to tack on to Hamilton; the man is *sans reproche*. Probably that's why I loathe him—a handsome devil—saving your presence, Father; and a slave-driver. Jinny will be his white slave, I foresee, and become voiceless, eyeless, nerveless—horrible! In our own way each of us three wants her. You desire her soul; I her voice and astral body, if I may so express it; Hamilton regards her with temporary passion (his love won't last, it's too selfish to endure), and permanent self-interest

as an insect-drawer. His stake is the lowest, so he wins and we lose. Fiat!"

"Yes, I desire her soul," said the Jesuit, "and I'll gain it yet for God, although at present she has—all unconsciously, which is a mercy—made the great refusal."

"Yes, 'weariness may toss her to God's breast', I don't deny it," interrupted Grant. "But she has, as you say, refused a definite spiritual offer. May I say, without irreverence, although she has heard the angel's message, the annunciation has failed, because she has not replied: 'Behold the handmaid.'"

"The Angelus rings for us one and all," said Father Robins. "Maybe you have heard its chime as I have, Mr. Grant?"

"Too late! Too late!" murmured the old man sadly. "Life's noon and even have passed, and now night lies before me. But, to change the subject; Velu, that young Sanyasi who has taken up his abode close to the Bevans, seems to be a progressive. I found him studying the New Testament the other day. Have a dig at him, Father Robins. He may be a spiritual Golconda!"

"I say Mass down there to-morrow. I'll have a look at him," replied the Jesuit. "God never shoots an arrow at a venture—the shaft of grace which Jinny has eluded may find a resting-place in Velu's heart."

Their ways parted. Grant walked slowly and sadly homeward. Somewhat to his own astonishment he had turned to the priest as a forlorn hope. He who had once tried to prevent Jinny from embracing Catholicism, now longed that she had done so. Anything seemed better to him than this intended and rapidly approaching marriage.

CHAPTER XII

"I HAVE made up my mind to send the children home, and there's no use arguing about it, Constance," said Bevan, querulously. "Can't afford it? Nonsense! We must afford it. Too young? Bosh! If they start next month they'll get home in the summer. Oh no, it's impossible for you to take them home yourself. I'm sure the Urquarts of Madras would let the children join their home-ward party."

He lit a cigarette with tremulous fingers, and leaned back in his cane lounge. Mrs. Bevan bent her head above the embroidery she was making, her tears dropped heavily upon the fine material. She had grown very thin and fragile-looking; even her lustrous hair had lost some of its sheen.

Outside, two peacocks strutted beneath the flowering orange-trees, uttering shrill cries, spreading their gorgeous fans in the blaze of sunshine that shimmered in the garden.

"It will be very lonely without the children," sighed Constance wearily.

"You can ask your friends to stay with you—any, that is to say, except Vaughan. I don't want any revival of that scandal, please. And, after all, I'm here pretty often myself. Madras doesn't suit me any more than it suits you. We may get on better together without the children. They take up all your time."

Temptation as well as sorrow tugged at the wife's heart-strings. How easily she could sell out some of her own capital and sail home with Tim and Cathie! She was not well—a constant weariness obsessed her; ill-health, surely, was an honest plea

for absence from a husband whose every word stung harshly, whose presence even had lately become offensive. He was so rude, tyrannical, unjust. To every Anglo-Indian mother comes the dread summons of renunciation. She should not keep her children in the East. Some obey and bear the separation bravely; so ought Constance Bevan to have done, but since she had ceased to like her husband, her children were her all.

There was a rush of running feet; two little figures ran across the green turf, dived between bushes, scattered orange blossoms and scared the peacocks, then, reaching the veranda, shouted to their mother:

"Uncle Philip is coming up the ghat!"

A wave of color flooded Mrs. Bevan's face, and, fading, left it paler than before. Her husband's jealous eyes noted the passing flush.

"What the devil has he left Trivandrum for?" he growled. "I won't have him here to tiffin, Constance; he can go up to his mother in Pulnaikanal."

Mrs. Bevan rose. She rolled up her strip of embroidery with steady fingers.

"Please don't be silly, Jim," she said, with no little dignity. "Of course, Philip always lunches here on his way up."

Before her husband could reply she moved away toward the servants' quarters.

"Why do you hate Uncle Philip, daddy?" asked little Cathie.

"I don't, you goose."

"You do," the child nodded sagely. "And I know why. Mrs. Blair has gossiped about him and mummy"—oh, precocious Anglo-Indian baby!—"Tim and I found out all about it, and do you know what we did? We started gossiping about Mrs. Blair; harmless gossip, daddy, *not* detraction. Now

whenever we meet beggars we send them to her. We say: 'Oh, Mrs. Blair is a *very* charitable lady; she gives heaps and heaps away, money and food, as well as news of all sorts.' So all the beggars swarm about her gate. I expect it worries her. I hope it does; she is a poisonous toad!"

Bevan laughed.

"Well done!" said he. "A masterly counter-stroke, my dear. Now you had better run away and wash your hands. You look extremely grubby, and so does Tim."

"I told her her pet dog would never get into our house," continued Cathie. "She simply adores her terrier! She said: 'And pray why not, my dear?' So I said: 'I see your dog has fleas. If it got into our house a flea might get on daddy and bite him. Dandy will never come into our house, Mrs. Blair.' She was quite angry, daddy!"

Bevan laughed again.

"Well, run away," said he, "for here comes Uncle Philip."

Vaughan approached his old friend with a smile and outstretched hand.

"I hope you're feeling better, Jim," said he.

Smart, well-groomed, alert, Vaughan presented a vivid contrast to the seedy-looking, self-indulgent lawyer.

"Oh, I'm only so-so," grumbled Bevan, with averted and shifty eyes. "And how do you like Trivandrum? Sit down and have a cheroot. Constance will no doubt be here in a minute."

"Oh, it's rather a hole to be stuck in for five years," answered Philip. "I've taken a few days' leave, as my mother wrote that she wasn't very fit."

"She's looking old; she worries," observed Bevan, "about you," he added. "Wants you to be married and settled down."

"There's no hurry about that," retorted Vaughan, flicking the ash from his cigar unconcernedly.

Bevan marveled at his coolness and lack of self-consciousness when all the Pulnaikanal world had bandied his name about, linking it unpleasantly with that of Constance.

"How are the children, Jim?"

"I am going to send them home next month."

"Is Constance going with them?"

"No."

Vaughan puffed at his cigar. Reflectively he watched the smoke rings rise and break.

"Hard luck on her," was all he said.

The Bevans' *bhoy* appeared.

"Masters, tiffin is served," said he.

The table in the dining-room was laid for two and soup was already waiting.

"Where is the mistress?" asked Bevan. This absence of his wife surprised and startled him. It chagrined Vaughan, whose disappointment was plainly visible.

"Missus has gone to Pulnaikanal to do some shopping. I thought master knew," replied the servant.

"What a little fool to go out in the sun!" growled Bevan, and that was all he remarked about the matter.

Philip drank his soup somewhat thoughtfully in silence.

Soon after tiffin he excused himself, and proceeded on his journey up the ghat.

Inside the shelter of his cave sat Velu. He saw the approaching procession, and recognized Philip Vaughan. As the latter drew near, the Sanyasi left his dwelling and came forth to meet him.

"Salaam, may I address your honor?" said he stiffly, for he felt nervous.

Vaughan bade his bearers halt. Leaving his chair he approached the young Sadhu.

"Well, Velu," said he kindly, "how fares it with you?"

"I would say a word into your honor's ear alone," answered the youth.

The policeman dismissed his coolies, and bade them proceed without him up the hills.

"Master, I was in the temple court when Cochapey confessed," said the Sanyasi. "Before that I chanced to overhear a conversation between your servant and perhaps a priest within the temple. It concerned myself, hinting that European blood runs in my veins. Nor is this all. Narayan, the son of Cochapey, accused me to the face of western parentage, saying he knew me by a certain amulet which I will show your honor—here it is—a moonstone heart; and that I was born, or baptized, a Christian. Master, these are vexatious accusations, the buzzing of tiny, yet virulent mosquitoes in my ear. I beg your honor to kindly inquire into the matter, through your servant, and let me know results. Nay, keep the trinket for the present, master. It may be of help."

"Narayan is dead," said the policeman. "He was found dead of a snake bite in a Trivandrum temple."

"I saw him die."

"He was probably as big a scoundrel as his father," asserted Vaughan, "perhaps a liar. Yet, Velu, I have heard doubts cast upon your birth before. Surely you are Eurasian?"

"I know nothing of my origin, neither does Thannu Pillai," answered the young man, gravely. "God's will be done if I am not a Hindu. But let me know the truth, your honor, for it alone I crave."

"I'll institute inquiries in Madura and Trivan-

drum, and sift the matter to the bottom," said Vaughan kindly.

He put the moonstone into his purse and left the shola.

"What a wasted life!" thought the policeman, as he hurried on to rejoin his entourage. "A selfish, aimless existence, idle and senseless. The wretched fellow might be at college or at some decent work. These pestilential Sadhus are a curse! He is attractive and always reminds me of somebody—but of whom I cannot say. If he turns out to be Eurasian I'll move heaven and earth to get him to be a man and give up all this nonsense."

The shades of evening were falling over hill and lake when Philip approached his mother's house. He was about to enter the garden when, in the darkling doorway of the Catholic Church hard by, he descried the shadowy form of Constance Bevan. Probably she had just been to confession; it was Saturday, and Father Robins' hour for penitents.

Philip told his servant to attend to his luggage and the coolies, then, entering the church porch, he greeted Constance, holding out his hand.

Perhaps she did not see it, for she continued buttoning her long glove, and only smiled at him. Even in the twilight he noticed how pale and lusterless she seemed; her reddened eyelids showed that she had been weeping. In a cream riding-habit and white-veiled sailor hat she appeared almost spectral.

"I was so disappointed not to find you at home," said Philip.

"I hope tiffin was all right?" she faltered.

"It was you I wanted, not tiffin," said he half reproachfully. "Jim tells me that the children are going home. I am so sorry. But, Constance, we can't talk in here, and I haven't seen you for ages. Do come into the presbytery garden and sit down."

"I cannot stay," she answered. "It is late, and I must be going home."

"There is a moon to-night, and it is early yet."

"Your mother expects you; I must not keep you, Philip," she turned away, gathering up her riding-habit in one hand. Her voice and manner were extremely cold—repellant almost.

"Constance, have I offended you?" said Vaughan, huskily. "Is it possible that you blame me for those stupid letters?"

She shook her head.

"Then why not talk to me? My time up here is short, and my mother will claim it all after to-night."

"We are watched," she murmured. "The very servants spy upon me."

"By Jim's orders? Oh, but he must be mad!" cried Vaughan. His voice rose as he added fiercely: "Is he unkind to you?"

Some persons passed them, stared at the policeman, and went into the church.

"I *will* speak, either here or in the gardens," said Vaughan, imperiously.

"Then let us go into the garden," answered Mrs. Bevan, "for a little while."

Beneath a shady Wellingtonia in the priest's garden was a bench. Here they sat down and watched the sunset stain the lake's surface. After a moment's silence:

"You look most miserably thin," said Philip bluntly. "Is Jim at his old tricks again—tormenting you?"

"He cannot help it; he is not himself," she murmured.

"You should go home with the children."

"And leave him? How can I? He would drink

himself into delirium. I must look after him; it is my duty."

Vaughan groaned aloud.

"Oh, Constance, dear, I cannot bear to see you wretched," he said, taking her hand in his.

Immediately she withdrew it, and locked it within the other in her lap.

"And I cannot help you much, cannot come to the rescue immediately as I used to do. Trivandrum is so very far away."

"Don't worry about me; I can bear it all—everything except the parting from the children," she whispered. "But perhaps it is really best that they should go away."

"Perhaps; yet your loneliness will be intolerable. Well, I'll try to come and stay with you and Jim when they are gone. I dare say I can get leave."

"You mustn't. You must never come again," said Mrs. Bevan. "We must give up our friendship; people talk about it."

He laughed sardonically.

"I knew you were offended. Your manner even is quite different, and I can see that you are tired to death of me, annoyed because—incidentally—I am the unfortunate cause of those vile letters."

She was silent, motionless, and calm.

"Am I not right?" In his impatience, stung by the consciousness of her misery, his emotions stirred—how greatly he did not realize—he grasped her arm.

The touch was slight, yet it caused her to shrink away with a cry of pain, and then he noticed that her arm was swollen to the shoulder. Swiftly his eyes sought her neck and cheek: they both were bruised.

"My God, he has beaten you!" cried Vaughan. "And that is why you hid away from me!"

Her only answer was a moan. Shamefacedly, burying her averted face between her hands, she leaned away from him, crouching in that corner of the bench where the tree's shade lay deepest. Her hat slipped down and drooped upon her shoulder.

"Please, go away; you are not kind. I think that all men are unkind and selfish," she murmured.

"Constance, forgive me! Say you do not hate me. Look at me!" he cried.

Unlocking her hands he drew her tear-stained face toward him, and gazed into her eyes.

Therein, reading the tender cause of her heart's misery, straightway his eyes were opened; his own soul, nakedly and truly, stood in love's vivid searchlight.

"I think I must always have loved you, only I did not know it, Constance," he uttered brokenly.

Falling upon his knees, he took her head between his hands and held it to his breast, murmuring endearments, stroking the soft hair and softer brow.

And for awhile she rested in his embrace; then, tearing herself away, she pushed him from her.

"Oh, go, my dear, and never come again!" she cried out, with a strangled sob. "I cannot bear it, and it is sinful, Philip—vile and sinful."

"No, it is not. You need not fear me," he assured her. "You are the only woman I have ever loved or ever shall love, Constance. I'll shrine you as my saint in my heart's heart, and crown you as my queen. But never, never shall a breath of passion hurt your soul, my dear. I'm glad I know at last that I love you, glad that you love me. Such love shall make us braver, stronger, better. But, darling, you must separate from Jim, and go home with the children."

She shook her head.

"No, I shall never leave him, Philip. Perhaps

presently, if he does not see you, he may forget this rabid jealousy. I dare say when the children have gone home—he is even jealous of the children, Philip—he may be kinder. Meanwhile, let us ever remember each other in our prayers, meet seldom socially, if we can avoid it, never even write.”

He bowed his head.

“I can make no promises. I shall watch over you—never mind how, but I shall manage it—and see how Jim behaves.”

“And now go to your mother. Good-night, I must go home,” said Constance.

So she left him.

Vaughan entered the church as Father Robins was leaving the confessional. Moved by a sudden impulse, the policeman opened his purse, and offering an alms, begged that the priest would say a Mass for his intention. As he replaced the purse, something clinked on the stone floor; he paid no heed, his thoughts were absorbed in Constance.

Turning to a statue of our Lady close at hand, he lit half a dozen votive candles, bending his knee and bowing his head for a brief while in prayer. Then he left the church, and sought his mother's home.

Jinny also paid a visit to the church that evening; her pennies also found their way to our Lady's box, and a round dozen of slender tapers were soon ablaze. The girl knelt a long time praying for light and guidance in the new life which lay before her. David had gone to Madras, to complete certain arrangements for their honeymoon, which was to be spent in Ootacamund, and to buy a present for his bride. Therefore Jinny had a whole evening to herself; a time in which to pray and meditate—generally she was too busy to be faithful to either. She was

grieved to find that a sense of sweetness was lacking from her prayer; it was cold and arid, lifeless, loveless. Almost it seemed that God had hidden Himself behind a veil, or rather behind a drop-scene so covered with the painted incidents of daily life, so strewn with loves and roses, that all which was spiritual and therefore truly real, was relatively blotted out. It was vain to say "Sursum corda"; her heart fettered to earthly businesses as to a rock, refusing to rise to Heaven; distractions buzzed about her.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death—and in my hour of marriage," added Jinny, not irrelevantly; she really meant it.

Her rosary slipped from her fingers—much drawing had made them tired—on to the ground. She stooped to pick it up, and saw—a moonstone heart. It lay and twinkled at her. She picked it up, turning it over in her hand. Then she decided to give it to Father Robins after Mass next morning—though nominally a Protestant, she still came to Mass—slipping it into her pocket in the meanwhile.

A lay brother padded past: the hour for closing the church had come. Hastily finishing her prayer, Jinny arose and left the building.

The sun had set; the whole atmosphere was soaked in a sublime red and gold afterglow. On ahead of her Jinny saw Constance Bevan, all in white, upon a slow-paced pony. The girl ran quickly after her dear friend, and overtook her.

"How are you—and the children?" she inquired. "I hardly ever see you now, I am so busy. After my marriage I must come and see you oftener."

"Indeed, you are a stranger," answered Constance. "And is the wedding-day settled, Jinny?"

"Mother has already sent you an invitation. I

am to be married next Thursday," said the girl brightly. "You must come up and see my trousseau, Mrs. Bevan."

"I'm afraid I cannot, dear. I, too, am busy. The children go home next month, and I must get their outfit ready."

"Oh, I am sorry!" faltered Jinny. "I hope it's not for want of a governess that they are going?"

"No. Mr. Bevan thinks they are too old to remain longer in the East. I dare say he is right."

"And you? Do you go with them?"

"Oh, no! My husband cannot spare me, Jinny."

The girl laid her hand upon the pony's neck, as she stepped along beside it.

"It must be hard to part with one's little children," she said softly. "I'm afraid I shall love my children better than my husband—if ever I have any. I am very fond of babies, though Clytie isn't."

"I hope you are attached to Mr. Hamilton?" observed Constance Bevan quickly.

"Oh! yes, of course I am, but a man can always take care of himself, and children cannot."

"Not always," said Mrs. Bevan. "We have to love and cherish our husbands, Jinny, and never forsake them for the little ones. Not but what I am glad you are fond of babies, dear. And how is Clytie? When does she return?"

"Not yet, but very likely sooner than we expected. The Rance of Aneimalei will not wait until Clytie has passed through the medical school; as soon as she knows enough to be a doctor, the Rance will make her return to India with her. You know she is paying all Clytie's expenses now. Is it not generous? She really loves Clytie as if she were her sister. I am quite jealous," and Jinny laughed.

They parted where the road twisted in the direc-

tion of Pembarganore, and Jinny walked quickly home in the sweet-scented gloaming.

She changed her dress for a dinner gown, and taking the moonstone from her pocket, placed it in a tray upon her toilet-table, ready to give to Father Robins on the morrow.

During dinner Mrs. King conversed chiefly upon the subject of her child's approaching marriage. A box containing the dresses had arrived from Madras in Jinny's absence. Her mother desired her to try them on after dinner and see if their fit were perfect. Therefore, as soon as the simple meal was ended, Jinny retired with her mother into her bed-room.

An amber colored tea gown called forth the liveliest expression of praise from Mrs. King. She made Jinny parade the floor and show it off, and then the wedding-dress itself was carefully unfolded from sheaves of tissue-paper and slipped over shoulders from which the rest-robe had been allowed to fall.

"It is lovely," drawled Mrs. King, "and suits you to perfection, but I can't see it properly in this dim candle light. Stay where you are, Jinny; I will fetch the drawing-room lamp."

She left the room hastily, and returned quickly with the lamp. Placing it upon the toilet-table, she examined Jinny's raiment in its full light. Certainly the child looked radiant: a bride lovely enough to be worshipped by any man, thought the ambitious mother fondly.

"It wants a catch just here, where the lace droops, mother, don't you think so? There are some tiny pins in my toilet tray, if you don't mind fetching one. I dare not move."

"It does," admitted Mrs. King. She went to the dressing-table, and bent over the porcelain tray.

"Why, Jinny! Where did you get this moonstone. Oh, God! it is the same—the very same!" she gasped.

Snatching the amulet from the dish, she placed it under the lamp, gazing at it with fascinated eyes and pallid cheeks.

"It is the very one my baby wore!"

"Mother! Impossible! You must be mistaken!" exclaimed Jinny. "I picked it up from the church floor, and was going to give it to Father Robins to-morrow after Mass."

"It is the same, I am certain. Oh, Jinny, my hand shakes, and I cannot see. Your eyes are better than mine. Come here—slip off your dress first, and put it on the bed—loosen the moonstone heart from its gold setting, and see what lies behind it; there ought to be a bit of paper there."

A small instrument used by Jinny for microscopical work lay on the table. Very carefully and slowly, in spite of her mother's exclamations of impatience, she extracted the crystal from its setting. Behind it lay a dirty faded scrap of paper.

"There is a bit of paper," admitted Jinny.

"Look closely," gasped her mother. "'Vincent King, May 24, 1869' ought to be written on it. Is it there? Oh, do be quick, child! How very slow you are!"

"It's there," said Jinny. "Oh, my darling mother, do not cry so!"

She drew Mrs. King closely to her heart—convulsive sobs choked the poor creature, then her tears flowed freely.

"Oh! how it brings everything back to me! Oh, my poor darling boy!" she sobbed hysterically. Her tears fell fast upon Jinny's bare white shoulders. "I have been bereft of everything," she lamented wildly; "all that I loved best—my husband, my baby boy and Clytie—now that Rancee has adopted Clytie, she too will be lost to me."

"You have me, my darling—do not weep," said Jinny. Hiding her face against her mother's hair,

she added softly: "And all the little babies that may come to me are yours, my dearest—yours. Does that not comfort you, my dear?"

"You are a good girl, Jinny," sobbed her mother. "You'll never leave me, will you, after your honeymoon is over? I don't mind that. I shall be too busy getting things ready for your and Mr. Hamilton's return to miss you sorely. You keep the moonstone, dear, and wear it round your neck. I have a gold chain which will do for it. When your first baby comes, we will call him Vincent, and let him wear it. Promise me you will call him Vincent, Jinny; and let me wash and dress him."

And Jinny promised.

"I can't imagine how the amulet ever got into the church," sighed Mrs. King, when she had wept her fill. "I suppose that old wretch Cochapey must have sold it to some native Christian, and she dropped it there. It seems quite providential for you to get it, Jinny: too strange to be a mere coincidence. Now I shall go to bed. I feel quite worn out. I dare say you can manage to tidy up the dresses. Your own ayah—the woman David chose for you in Madras—will be up here to-morrow. Good-night—and you might put a lime squash by my bedside in case I am thirsty in the night. I have cried so much, I feel quite feverish. You can get the chain out of my jewel box at the same time. I should like to see you wear the moonstone, Jinny."

CHAPTER XIII

"It all went off very well, indeed," said Mr. Blair complacently to Grant, "and I am glad that she was married in her own church."

"So am I," assented Mrs. Blair, who, where parochial matters were concerned, always sat on the box with the driver—figuratively.

"I fancy Father Robins has washed his hands of her," continued the parson blandly. "But here come the Catholic contingent; we had better drop the thorny subject of religion."

Grant went forward to meet and greet the Vaughans and Bevens. Accompanied by Philip and Mrs. Bevan, the leading lady slowly crossed the club compound, leaning upon a crooked ebony stick. Not that to-day she counted as *prima donna*. For once she had relegated her place to Mrs. King, who, in honor of Jinny's marriage, which had been solemnized that morning, was giving a really smart at-home, at Hamilton's expense, in the Pulnaikanal Club. It was a lovely day, cloudless, ambiently blue and sunny; the distances were vividly clear and crystalline; the foreground gay with luxuriant blossoms, seductive perfumes hung upon the air. Nature, decked in her sweetest blooms, had smiled on Jinny's bridal.

"My dear lady, what a delight and what a surprise to see you out again! I trust you are really better?" said the ex-judge to Mrs. Vaughan.

"Yes, I am on the mend. Philip's brief visit has already cheered me up. A change of companionship—the arrival of one we love—is better than a change of air to us old people, Mr. Grant. Do you not think so?"

The ex-judge concealed his chagrin beneath a veil of smiles: he loathed to be called "old"; the very idea was hostile to his perennially youthful spirit.

"Surely we have neither of us yet passed the Rubicon of middle age?" he objected vehemently. "But if you insist, I must needs say '*place aux dames*,' and follow you later on, not yet awhile!"

Mrs. Vaughan laughed.

"You have no measuring rod by which to mark the passing years, as I have, Mr. Grant," she said, laying her hand lightly upon Philip's shoulder. "You see, I can't deny the fact that I am old enough to be a grandmother."

"I envy you your rod. It is a staff as well," the ex-judge sighed.

"Because of it I do not greatly fear the valley of the shadow into which I must now soon pass," said Mrs. Vaughan. Then, lightly changing a too serious subject: "Our little Jinny made a pretty bride," she said.

Old Grant grimaced with an expressive gesture.

"Poor child! She occupies rather a secondary place in Hamilton's affections," he said acidly. "Actually the butterfly net and killing bottle formed part of his honeymoon impedimenta. Lord save us from these scientific fellows!"

"At least their tastes agree," objected Philip. "Miss Jinny—Mrs. Jinny, I beg her pardon—delights in sketching insects. Did you observe the bride's ornaments, Constance? I noticed a moonstone heart that she was wearing."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bevan. She helped Mrs. Vaughan into a garden chair, and taking another which Philip had placed for her, sat down beside her. "Yes, she especially drew my attention to it. The child picked it up from the church floor on Saturday, and actually Mrs. King identified it as the amulet

worn by her little son, who was murdered, you remember."

"Was Mrs. King positive about it?"

"Oh, yes! The boy's name and birth-date are written upon a card inside the setting."

Vaughan gazed quietly at the lake, whose waters broke in wavelets against a landing-stage close to the club compound. His imagination wandered away to a cavern in a tree-fern shaded shola. "Poor Velu! It will be no easy matter to break the news to him," thought the policeman. Well indeed did he understand the Sanyasi's heart and Eastern pride. And Mrs. King—how extremely awkward such a situation would appear to the pseudo-English lady! A tragi-comedy indeed! Vaughan smiled as he pictured the long-haired, muslin-garbed Sadhu at the club, and heard him introduced as "This my son!" Were it not better to keep silence? He resolved to refer the matter to Father Robins, and take his advice, abiding by the same. He had no idea that the Jesuit was already intensely interested in Velu, and had talked to him not once, but many times.

"What an extraordinary coincidence!" exclaimed old Grant. "The murderer was hanged, I fancy?"

"He was," said Vaughan, "at first self-accused, at the end he protested innocence, and I thought the crowd would have tried a rescue."

All Pulnaikanal seemed to be at Mrs. King's at-home. She received her guests in the large salon, and greeted all with equable effusion. Dressed in old-gold satin—her mourning garb was finally discarded—she looked extremely handsome and sublimely happy. Jinny had "made her market," and made it well. Mrs. King beamed contentment and affluence upon her guests. What matter if more spiritual members of the Pulnaikanal social world accused her in audible asides of selling Jinny to an

atheist? Jealousy and envy doubtless rankled in their souls. Hamilton was a big catch, and they had missed him—there were many spinsters in the Non-conformist missionary settlement, and all more or less unsettled!

Father Robins' absence was another reason for satisfaction. Mrs. King hoped that Jinny had escaped the yoke of Rome by placing her neck under the natural yoke of marriage. Of course, the Jesuit disapproved her act and choice. It was as well. Hamilton would know how to keep the cleric at a distance; no peg in the Kings' bungalow displayed a place for the cloak of friendship with Father Robins.

The Blairs also were evidently well content. Jinny would yet be wooed back to the choir, if Hamilton could spare her.

Yes, Mrs. King had good reason for her conviction that Jinny had deliberately turned her back on Rome. Grant was correct in affirming that a killing bottle had been taken by the bride and bridegroom to Ootacamund. Indeed, Jinny had been asked to find room for it in her trunk. Consequently a rather large crucifix—the gift of Constance Bevan—had to be left behind, also all prayer-books; no room existed for these and the killing bottle, so they were discarded.

Thus Mrs. King, for one rare hour in her troublous complaintful life, saw the world through rose-colored glasses. The past retired into a dim obscurity, the present danced quite gaily; about the future she had no fears at all. Laughter and congratulations surrounded her like good fairies; champagne bubbled. When dusk fell, and evening unfolded its grey pinions around the hills, dancing was begun, old Grant and Mrs. Blair taking turns to make the pianoforte resound with music.

True, when to the strains of an entrancing waltz Philip and Mrs. Blair swept past their hostess, Mrs. King deplored the absence of Clytie, whom Vaughan had openly admired, and might by now have married, had she not been so foolish as to run away. Ah, well! but Clytie—beautiful Clytie—should have her innings next, thought the far-sighted, doting mother.

"Here is your cloak, and the chair is ready for you. I am going to see you home," said Philip Vaughan to Constance. They stood in the black and white moonlight-checkered compound. Within the tropics, moonshine breaks up the landscape into distinct patches of sharpest dazzling brilliancy and darkest shade, half tones do not exist.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Bevan. "Jim promised that he would fetch me, but he has not come."

"I am returning to Travancore to-night—my coolies are down the ghat already," said the policeman. "I have a message to give to that Sanyasi who lives in the shola close to your place. Do you mind if we halt there for a moment?"

"Certainly, do," said Mrs. Bevan. "I often see that young Sadhu, and he appeals to my imagination as no other native has ever done. His knowledge of English is excellent, and he has ideas. It's a pity his life should fritter away in aimless idleness. I believe Father Robins is praying for his conversion."

The news pleased Vaughan. It made his task much easier. After helping Constance into her doolie, he took the chair behind, and soon the two were being carried down the hillside by trotting coolies.

From within her litter, the curtains of which were drawn back to let in the cool night air, Constance

gazed dreamily at the black and white world about her, at the clear heavens, whence the moon, reigning paramount, blotted out all lesser luminaries. Indeed, so beautiful did the night appear, that she almost wished it could be prolonged indefinitely. Her heart was now at peace. Her love for Philip, which had once disturbed her, threatening to become passionate and insistent, had, after being boldly faced and challenged by them both, lost all its sting and danger. Together they had borne their burden—human love—to heights where the atmosphere is too pure and rarefied to breed pestilence and corruption. Placing it upon the highest of God's altar-steps, they had given it into His keeping, not in vain. The oblation was accepted, the sword of purity given in exchange. Philip had placed it between himself and Constance; its blade would not be tarnished. Since their parting in the presbytery garden, they had met only this once, at Mrs. King's party. After to-night they might or might not meet again for months or even years. Yet they were both content, for Philip did not doubt that a way of escape from Bevan's cruelty would be found for Constance. She trusted that strength sufficient to bear the trials of every day would be given to her.

The Sanyasi was outside his cave when they reached the shola. In the bright moonlight he looked pale and ghost-like in his draperies. Vaughan bade the bearers pause, then called out to Velu to approach him.

"I have found out certain facts," he said quietly, speaking in English, so that the coolies should not understand, "but I have no time to tell them to you. I will write to Father Robins, and ask him to explain. You know him, I believe?"

"Yes, your honor, but I prefer to hear the truth

from your own lips. Surely it cannot take very long to tell it?"

"It is unpleasant. I cannot blurt it out. Mrs. Bevan is in that doolie; I must not detain her."

"As your honor pleases," said the Sadhu. "A matter that has waited for my knowledge all my life can wait for a while longer. It is not whence I came, but whither I am tending that really counts. My true parentage is of God; flesh and blood are but mere accidents. If I wend back to the Eternal, all will be well, your honor."

"Then good-night and good-by, Velu; I am on my way to Travancore," said Vaughan, and bade the coolies proceed upon their journey.

Two little figures were silhouetted against the sandy road. Tim and Cathie awaited their mother's arrival at the bungalow.

"Why, children dear, you ought to be in bed!" cried Constance.

"Ayah let us stay up," explained Tim. "Daddy is in a temper, mummy dear."

"Well, say good-by to Uncle Philip; he's going to Trivandrum, you won't see him again for years," said Constance bravely.

Cathie held up her face to be kissed by Vaughan.

"How big shall I be when we meet again?" she asked, rather tremulously. Like most sensitive children, she hated all good-bys.

"Oh! taller than I am, I expect, and as for Tim, he and I will do a lot of shikar together when he comes back. Mind you go in for the police, 'old man!'"

"No fear," said Tim, wringing his friend's hand vigorously. "I mean to grind away, pass all my 'exams' with credit, and come out again when I'm nineteen, Uncle."

Then the boy added softly, and rather wistfully:
"And, I say, you'll keep an eye on daddy, won't you? He's a bit queer at times."

"All right!" said Vaughan.

His acute hearing detected a movement among the orange shrubs where lay dark pools of night. He almost fancied that a muttered oath pierced through the blackness.

"You'd better run away and go to bed, both of you," he said.

Cathie flung herself into the policeman's arms, and hugged him warmly.

"Good-by, dear old Uncle! Don't forget Christmas, and my birthday, will you?" she exclaimed; then, without waiting for an answer, ran away. Tim followed rather slowly, walking behind her shadow, which danced grotesquely on the sandy path.

The coolies had regained the mountain road; Constance and Philip were alone.

"And now good-by!" said she. "God bless you, Philip—pray for me always."

A sudden impulse, a desire to render homage to his lady, brought the man who loved her so dearly to his knees. Taking her hands in his, he kissed them reverently, then rose and gazed at her serene fair face.

"And so, good-by!" said he. "But remember, dear, that you will be looked after, never be really alone and unprotected. Do not ask me how, but I have arranged things fairly to my own satisfaction."

He turned away. As he did so, the bushes rustled. The stillness of that lovely summer night—its beauty sleep—was broken by a loud report: a bullet tore up the sand a foot away from Vaughan, another hit a tree close to his head. Constance sprang to him with a cry; he pushed her away firmly, but very gently, then dashed into the boscaje

without a moment's hesitation. As he did so, his servant Alexander and the Bevans' butler rushed to his assistance. They appeared to spring from nowhere—a convenient way with natives.

"I have him!" gasped Vaughan.

There was a feeble scuffle, a snapping of dried twigs, a smothered oath. Into the moonlight lurched an infuriated drunken man, who fell in a huddled heap upon the path.

"Jim, old man! Is it possible? I thought you were some dirty native!" stammered Vaughan.

The servants moved away—they were out of place, and knew it. Constance stood as though rooted to the spot, pale, calm, motionless as a statue.

"Thank God, the children are going home so soon! Oh, thank God!" she murmured.

Bevan scrambled to his feet with an uncertain movement. His blood-shot eyes glared furiously at Vaughan.

"Dirty native! Filthy beast yourself!" he hic-coughed. "I saw you slobbering over my wife's hands, and making love to her in my own compound. Get out, or I'll shoot you at sight like a mad dog. Where is my revolver?"

Stooping as though to search for the weapon which Vaughan now held, he tripped and fell again.

"Gad, there are snakes about this place!" he yelped excitedly, then whimpered: "Constance, come here, will you, and help me—there's a good girl!"

Mrs. Bevan was at her husband's side immediately.

"Come indoors, Jim. You are ill, you must go to bed," she said firmly.

"I won't leave you alone with Vaughan, I won't!" he whined tearfully.

"Philip is going. Come with me at once; lean on my arm."

Like some serene angel of mercy, the wife helped her delirious degraded husband home. She did not even glance at Philip; her whole heart and mind were concentrated on the miserable man who craved her pity.

"Alexander!"

"Sir," responded the policeman's servant.

"You must remain here on duty until I send for you. You are to control Bevan doré and look after the lady, she needs protection. I shall send a note to Dr. McIntyre about the case, and tell him to come down. Perhaps he will be able to procure a mental nurse. As you perceive, the doré is quite mad."

"Sir!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Your honor has no servant but the peon. My brother, who lives in Madura, is free at present. If master allows, I will tell the peon to bid him wait on master in my absence."

"Very good. I will tell the peon myself. Now go immediately, and see to Mr. Bevan."

The man salaamed, and glided on silent feet after the disappearing forms of Constance and her husband.

For a moment Vaughan stood irresolute. His heart misgave him at the notion of leaving Constance, and yet he had no choice. His presence would only add fuel to the fire of Bevan's mania. Taking a note-book from his pocket, he tore out a leaf, and scribbled a few lines to Dr. McIntyre. Then he rejoined his coolies, and bade the peon send one instantly to Pulnaikanal with the letter. Presently he let himself be carried down the ghat, heartsick and miserable, only half consoled by the knowledge that Alexander was on the spot as Constance's protector.

When Bevan was in bed, and Alexander, whose services had been thankfully accepted by Mrs. Bevan, seated not far off, the wife flitted away to pay a last visit to the nursery before seeking her own room. As she bent above the cots of Tim and Cathie, and watched their sleeping faces in the moonlight, she again thanked God that they were going home, parting before they were conscious of his degradation, from their father; and snatched from an immoral atmosphere in which her own heart pined and wilted; saved in their innocence from all contagion. It had been difficult to resign herself to the coming parting; now it was easy, nay, she longed for it. Light showed at the end of the tunnel of dread loneliness through which she must needs pass; love guided the Divine Hands which were loading her with sorrow.

Tim was going to Stonyhurst, Cathie to a convent. Both would be very happy; neither would miss her long in the new life that lay before them.

She bent with quivering lips but tearless eyes, and kissed her children.

Surely, as pain must often be invoked to drive out pain, so sorrow must be increased if sadness is to be dispelled. Strange but true paradox, to be made clear and comprehensible only when mundane matters are at last viewed in the clear radiance of an eternal dawn.

Jinny lay in a lounge chair upon the veranda of an hotel in Ootacamund, where David and she were spending their honeymoon. Charminglly dressed in a very pretty pale green rest gown, her hair artistically coiled, her face fresh and smiling, she looked a graceful and contented creature. A plate of chocolates stood upon a small teapoy by the lounge, where lay her unopened letters. From her resting-

place she commanded a splendid view of the surrounding country, of its amethystine mountains, clothed in a hazy veil of grey-green blue gums, its curves and undulations. Somewhere in those distances David was botanizing in his indefatigable way. On a plea of weariness she had obtained permission to remain at home. Some insect drawings ought to be completed by the time the biologist should return. Jinny was afraid they would not be, for she felt extremely lazy. She nibbled a chocolate, and gave a happy sigh. David had made her extremely happy; she basked in his warm love like a contented kitten. Matrimony, she had swiftly concluded, was a delightful state. As she looked back across the perfect span of her short married life to the old days of maidenhood, that now seemed infinitely far away, she marveled at the simplicity of her former outlook; the small humble things that had then seemed so important, the mild enthusiasms which had now lost their vitality. Married life resembled that magic rod of Aaron, which, turning into a serpent, swallowed all lesser serpents. In uniting her life to David's she had poured her smaller being into a larger vessel; her life expanded, it became a new creation, and in her eyes it was very good. It appeared incredible that Mass and Benediction had ever represented the acme of her delight. Religion had come to be a very secondary affair. As Mr. Grant had once admitted, it was a mere outlet for emotion. That outlet she now needed no longer. She swam in a vast ocean of human love, uplifted by its foaming crests of passion, deluded into the belief that all was well.

Stretching out her hand, she listlessly turned over her correspondence. A letter from Clytie claimed her first attention, so she opened it. After a few lines of congratulation, bidding her sister, how-

ever, not to forget the fact that Hamilton's arrival in Pulnaikanal had been entirely due to her own unwearied endeavors on her family's behalf, Clytie went on to advise her sister about a matter her knowledge of which it would be best to keep from David.

"People who knew him well in London say that he is inclined to be rash in monetary matters, and has lately been speculating in telegraphic transfers. If successful, he may make lacs of rupees, and you will be a wealthy woman, but if he fails! I fear you are too young to have any influence over him, he would never listen to a mere girl like you, and any interference on mama's part would only irritate. But you might tell him incidentally that a good many have been broken lately by speculating upon the rise and fall of the rupee, and that I told you so. It is a good thing that mama is acting as your house-keeper. I hope Mr. Hamilton will remain in India until my return: then mama can come and live with me in Aneimalei. I don't suppose that I shall ever marry."

The letter slipped from Jinny's hand, and fell upon the floor. She was disquieted, not by the first, but by the last, portion of the letter. Somehow the idea of Hamilton's return to England had never crossed her mind; she marveled now that it had not done so. She had accepted him, and so had her mother, as a permanency. Now she realized how utterly improbable it was that he should spend the rest of his life in India. England meant separation from her mother; a miserable exile for herself; she was Anglo-Indian to the very core; in England she would pine and fade like an exotic. She had admired and marveled at Clytie's courage in stepping westward; for herself she would never dare to do so. By hook and by crook David must be persuaded

to continue to live in India. Remembering the butterfly drawings she had promised to finish for him, she rose from the lounge, and sought her own apartment, which served also as a studio.

Meanwhile Hamilton, after a busy morning, was returning homeward with Iyerswamy, who was laden with floral and insect spoils. Above the contour path which led to the hotel was a similar footway leading to the heights. Seated upon a bench on this upper road were a young subaltern and his bride, who were also honeymooning in the hotel. Although bushes hid them from Hamilton's view, their voices rang quite clearly in his ears; the mention of his wife's name caused him to pause.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Hamilton is an awfully pretty girl!" said the bride crisply, "but she's not pukka. Any one can see that she's Eurasian; the thing shouts at you, even her voice is chichi. Of course *he* hasn't been long enough in the country to notice it. It's rather a shame he should have been snapped up so soon, poor fellow."

"Perhaps she's an orphan," said the young subaltern. "It's the girl's people that matter most in such cases. Let us hope she has none. Beastly awkward for Hamilton if a score of nigger aunts and uncles trot upon the scene like a Christy Minstrel chorus!"

David heard the girl's rippling laughter, and it maddened him. Being extremely proud, he loathed to have his wife's name mentioned in such an odious way. He had not been long enough in the country to realize that, although the Kings were received into society, they were less English than Eurasian; nor had he grasped the fact that a drop of Eastern blood will inevitably condemn any girl, however pretty, in the eyes of those who live departmental lives, and move in Government House circles. He

had made a great mistake in bringing Jinny up to Ootacamund in the season, and now he realized it. Indeed, he had remarked that the hotel visitors had somewhat avoided them. He had construed this elusiveness to mean sympathy with the exclusive sensitiveness of a young bride; now, seeing how he had misinterpreted the aloofness, he resented it most bitterly. For a moment fury surged in his passionate heart. Almost he resolved to leave the place at once, and go elsewhere; then, remembering his flower and insect quest, he resolved not to do so; it would be simply cutting off his nose to spite his face. As he walked on, the sense of injury grew deeper. Why had not Grant—Vaughan—any one—told him that he would be making a misalliance if he married Jinny? Ridiculous as such a complaint appears, he yet nursed it fondly. Of course he had rushed headlong into marriage like a fool, lured by a pretty face. In a passionate moment he had taken to his own a girl he had only known a few weeks. Probably, Pulnaikanal had laughed loudly at him when his back was turned, and was smiling still. Mentally he reviewed Jinny, whom until that moment he had deemed quite perfect. Love cannot endure bad-tempered criticism: Cupid winged his flight from David on that homeward path. He might perhaps be whistled back again, blindfolded he certainly never would be again, and most of his arrows were now tipped with poison.

On reaching the hotel, Hamilton made immediately for the room where Jinny did her artist work. The girl sprang to her feet as he approached, threw both her arms around his neck, and kissed him.

"Dear, I have done nothing—I could not settle down to work," she said. "These butterflies must wait until another day."

"Nonsense, you must get them finished," he answered gruffly.

"But I am really tired to-day, David, and my eyes ache," pouted Jinny, putting her head on one side in a manner Hamilton had once thought quite bird-like and pretty, but which now appeared rather silly and affected.

"Nonsense!"

"Dear me, how fond you are of the word 'nonsense,'" laughed Jinny gaily. "I am going to revise the dictionary, David, and I shall explain the word thus: 'It is a word used by husbands when they know their wives are in the right, only they won't admit it.' David, do you know you look very cross? Did you not have a successful hunt?"

Wounded in his pride, Hamilton did what most selfish people do when they are peeved: he blurted out the whole brutal truth to Jinny. To his surprise she took it very well.

"But that is all nonsense—*real* nonsense this time, my dear," she said. "My father was of an old English family, old and poor. Mother, Clytie and I are received everywhere. As for 'nigger relations,' I shouldn't call Hindus 'niggers' myself, but any way—why, we haven't any!"

Then—"Oh, David," she said, turning the conversation into a fresh channel, "I heard to-day from Clytie. She says several men in London have lost a lot of money through telegraphic transfers—whatever those may be—and I thought that I would tell you."

"Why?"

Holding her at arms' length, Hamilton looked steadily at Jinny.

"Oh! it might interest you."

Her eyes fell, she looked confused.

"Speculations do not interest me at all," said

David coldly. "I wish you would finish painting that butterfly."

"At this rate we shall soon have exhausted all the specimens," suggested Jinny. "And your *magnum opus*, as you call it, will be ready in no time, David."

"Not at all—there are years of work before us," replied her husband. "When you have done this butterfly, come and pin out the fresh specimens for me; they are in the killing bottle."

He left the room without another word, and Jinny set to work immediately, filling in, with the aid of a magnifying glass, delicate color patches and hairy outlines. It grieved her that David should have been put out by such a trifle, as the overheard conversation appeared to her; his smothered anger and deliberate coldness sorely vexed the girl's heart. Sensitively she felt the rift within love's lute, and bravely resolved to mend it by working patiently and perseveringly at the task before her. Her painting was lovely—surely it must please David. Her eyes ached, but no matter; the pain—it almost amounted to a pain—would pass away—probably it was neuralgic.

During the remainder of the honeymoon Hamilton kept proudly aloof from all the hotel guests; he worked assiduously, and kept Jinny hidden away, and very busy also.

CHAPTER XIV

HIGH noon, fierily majestic, lorded it on the mountains. Lulled into a sultry swoon, tired nature rested. In umbrageous sholas, where tinkling waterfalls moistened and refreshed the thirsty air, the bell-bird rang out its clamant note, sonorously imitative of the Angelus.

Beside the pool that lent such an attractive coolness to his adopted shelter, sat Velu, gazing with dilated eyes upon the water. Not that he really saw it; sunk in deep contemplation, reduced to a state of profound apathy by prolonged fasting, all earthly things had faded from his view. Only that core of inmost being, that individuality which keeps eternally awake and never stoops to slumber, was most vividly alive and on the alert. Butterflies might brush his cheeks with dusty wings, he did not feel them; birds might perch boldly upon his hands and feet, a statue could not have paid them less attention. His nostrils did not perceive a thousand perfumes wafted from flowering shrubs and nectar-dripping balsams by the fans of wayward breezes. Rapt and entranced, his soul, oblivious of all creation, spoke with its God.

"I have prayed and fasted, renounced all things, have kept pure and stainless; draw me, unite me to Thyself." Such was the pleading of his wordless supplication.

Then into the noontide silence, broken only by the rhythmic clangor of the bell-bird, came a Vision vouchsafed to the interior eye alone, speaking to and answered only by the soul.

The form stood poised in mid-air, a foot or so away from Velu, and was draped in muslins like the Sanyasi. The head was swathed in linen, folded

turbanwise; the eyes were cast downward as though in search of something. Instinctively, Velu realized that he was in the presence of a holy person.

"Salaam! What do you want?" questioned the Sadhu, interiorly only, although it seemed to him that he spoke aloud.

"My son, I seek thy heart," was the reply.

"I gave it to Vaughan doré," answered Velu, thinking the questioner spoke of the moonstone amulet.

Immediately he was shown his mistake. It was a living heart that the Vision sought; for, opening His robe, He showed His own to Velu, saying: "This Heart shed its blood and was wounded for thee long ago. Thine alone can console it."

Enshrined in crystal, whence leaped a myriad light-rays, flushed and pulsated a Divine yet human Heart, red as a rose, deep as eternity, full of love's most mysterious mingled joy and pain.

"Why do you want my heart, Master?" faltered the Sadhu, amazed and humiliated by such splendor.

"That I may unite it to My own. For I am thine, thou art Mine," replied the Vision. "Thus only, Velu, canst thou attain to union with thy God, and He I am."

The Sanyasi sighed. Aware that he had no heart to offer, he felt sorrowful. Whilst acutely conscious of his soul, so strenuous and so ascetic, his heart had never been remembered even; long ago it had withered and became dry and dead.

"I have no heart, O holy One," he faltered.

"Then I will give thee Mine," replied the Vision.

A light more dazzling than the noontide sun blinded Velu; a fiery pang pierced through his bosom, scorching and burning like a living flame; engulfed in an ecstasy of agony, he knew no more.

. . . It seemed as though for aeons he was un-

conscious. Then, uplifted, revived by a fresh wave of awful torment, once more he faced the splendor of the Vision.

"Tell me Thy name, Heart-giver?" he demanded boldly.

"The Word Made Flesh," was the immediate answer.

Overcome by the extreme torture that consumed his breast, Velu once more became unconscious.

All day the Sanyasi sat beside the pool gazing upon its rippling waters, which he saw not. Toward evening ponies, goaded on by natives, trotted past the sholā, and the men, pausing in admiration before the youth, salaamed most reverently and threw offerings into his bowl, begging his blessing. Yet nought he heeded. Motionless, rapt in contemplation, mutely he questioned, and was answered, in the spirit. Twilight fell, and a clammy mist rose from the pallid pool; bird voices died away; flowers drooped and closed their eyes; tree fern shadows faded into the general blackness. Beneath the starlit vault of heaven sat the Sanyasi, heedless of all silvern grandeur. Strange beasts crawled forth from the dense undergrowth, and prowled about him. They snuffed and grumbled at the Sadhu, then slunk away amazed, afraid of him.

All night the soul of Velu held high communion with the Unseen. Soon after dawn a woman passed through the coppice, driving her flock of goats to pasture. Velu, awakening from his trance, begged for a draught of milk, and drank it thirstily; it was the first food he had tasted for many days. Thereafter, retiring into his cave, he passed some hours conning that small book which he had picked up on the beach in Travancore. At eve he slowly wended his way up to the Pulnaikanal presbytery.

Mrs. King was extremely busy preparing her bungalow for the return of Hamilton and Jinny, altering, rearranging, buzzing about in a chronic state of restless activity. Pedro followed in his mistress' wake, wearing an air of weariness in well doing, as distracted and miserable as a cat when it sees the household gods turned from one shrine into another, and misses its accustomed walks and lairs among the furniture.

Dust and confusion reigned in the drawing-room. Mrs. King defied the former by wearing a capacious overall and gloves; protecting her hair by an effective and becoming mob cap. Chaos was far more difficult to subdue than dirt.

She was wrestling with an awkward piece of furniture when Pedro announced the arrival of Father Robins.

"Good gracious! What can he want to see me about?" gasped the good lady. "Show him on to the veranda, Pedro. I hope he won't stay long."

She greeted the Jesuit "just as she was," in order to let him realize her state of busy-ness, and that his arrival was inopportune. Mrs. King was not at all partial to Father Robins.

The priest placed his tope upon a teapoy, and took his seat in a cane chair. The busy housewife sat down at the end of a lounge opposite, and after making some obvious remark about the sultry weather, waited for the Jesuit to speak. If he had come begging for his church and schools, he need have no hopes of her giving any money. Suddenly—misunderstanding a silence which she attributed to awkwardness—Mrs. King wondered whether Jinny owed him anything. The girl had been "under instruction," as she had called it; perhaps he charged a big fee for these—to Mrs. King—incomprehensible and unnecessary lessons.

She flushed as—figuratively—she rushed to the imagined object of his call.

"Ought Jinny to have paid you for her lessons?" she blurted out. "Is that why you have come?"

The priest produced a leather wallet, drew out a letter, and unfolded it.

"I hope your fees are not very heavy," she stammered. This evidently was the bill.

"Fees? What fees?" asked the Jesuit, as though waking up. "Oh, no! We do not charge for instruction," he added smiling, as Mrs. King again, and very impatiently, expressed her fear that Jinny might owe him money. "I have here a letter from Mr. Vaughan," he continued hesitantly, "and it refers to you."

"I'm sure *I* never said anything against him and Mrs. Bevan," exclaimed Mrs. King hotly. "I removed Jinny because I wanted her at home."

"The note is about—your son," said Father Robins. "He—you must prepare for good news, Mrs. King—he is alive, living, indeed, not very far from here."

The woman flushed vividly, then grew pale and trembled.

"Impossible! He was murdered when a baby—a man was hanged for it. Mr. Vaughan must be mistaken, surely?"

The Jesuit shook his head.

"No, I am glad to say there is no mistake," he answered. "He has produced evidence of his identity—a moonstone amulet. It seems," he continued, raising his hand to prevent Mrs. King from interrupting—floods of volubility were locked behind the sluice gates of her lips, which trembled toward speech—"it seems that the trinket was given to Vaughan by your son—he had worn it when an infant—and

that Vaughan dropped it in the church. There Miss Jinny found it; she wore it on her wedding-day."

"Oh, dear! That all seems true enough!" gasped the nearly-overcome mother. "Where is my Vincent? But wait—I feel faint. Pedro! Pedro!" she wailed somewhat feebly, "bring me a brandy and soda!"

Father Robins relapsed into silence. The servant brought the stimulant to his mistress, retiring when she had gulped some down.

"Shall I tell you about your boy? I know him fairly well," said the priest gently.

Mrs. King nodded. Her hands shook; she was quite pale and speechless.

"The man who murdered your ayah gave Vincent to a small bazaar merchant in Madura, named Thannu Pillai," said the Jesuit, after referring once again to Vaughan's letter. "This Thannu Pillai's wife was childless, she accepted the infant gladly, and the pair brought him up."

"Then he is now in Madura, I suppose," quavered Mrs. King. "Is he a shopkeeper?"

"No, he lives in a shola close to the Bevans' house," said Father Robins.

Mrs. King clutched at the cane lounge, and gripped it tightly; sweat stood upon her forehead in big beads.

"Do you mean that he lives the life of a native—that he wasn't educated?" she asked unsteadily.

"He is a Sanyasi," said the priest.

As he spoke, he turned away his head discreetly. A stifled moan of shame and anguish sounded from the lounge. To this the Jesuit wisely paid no heed. With averted face he waited in sympathetic silence for Mrs. King to speak.

For a long while the distracted mother sat motionless. Then she mopped the perspiration from

her face. Her brain, at first stunned and confused, began to right itself, to scheme a plan, some way out of—to her—an impossible and even terrible dilemma.

She remembered only too well the native appearance of her first-born. Jinny was the least Eastern of her children, both in appearance and in character. Clytie was of a dark and somewhat somber type; the boy—well, he had certainly not favored Captain King.

Mrs. King despised and, in her heart of hearts, detested natives. She shuddered at the bare suggestion of a quasi-Hindu son. She envisaged Hamilton's annoyance and dismay when he should be told that his wife's brother was a Sanyasi; Clytie's ungovernable rage at such a preposterous predicament. Jinny—she was quite uncertain as to Jinny's attitude; the girl was somewhat of a mystery to Mrs. King. She had even meant to be a Catholic——

"Father Robins"

The speaker's voice was calm and steady, it even lost its drawl, and had assumed a cutting edge.

"Yes, Mrs. King."

"Does anybody except yourself, and, of course, Mr. Vaughan, know about Vincent?"

"Nobody, as far as I am aware. Your son has, however, heard that there is a mystery about him."

"Then will you be so good as to keep the matter secret?"

The priest made no immediate answer. He folded up Vaughan's letter, and replaced it in the wallet. Then:

"From whom?" said he.

"From everyone, of course," answered Mrs. King with impatience. She twisted her handkerchief into a ball, and grasped it tightly.

"Including Vincent?"

"Certainly . . . It will pay you to keep silence. I will make it worth your while," she added swiftly.

"No doubt you can arrange a conspiracy of silence against the world with Philip Vaughan," said the priest coldly. "But Vincent must know the truth about his parentage."

"Pray, why?"

"If not for love, well, then for justice's sake," explained the Jesuit.

Mrs. King flushed darkly.

"How could I love anyone who has deteriorated, and become a native?" she said hoarsely. "And as for justice, I have Jinny to consider, not to mention Clytie. Their whole future, and the future of Jinny's children is at stake."

"Will you see Vincent? Don't answer me at once—just think it over," said Father Robins. "Then you can ask him to keep the matter secret."

Mrs. King shuddered.

"Oh, I couldn't—I really couldn't!" she exclaimed. "How little you understand a mother's feelings! Mine would be harrowed by such an interview. I loved—I still love—my little baby boy, but a Sanyasi is a thing of horror. Terrible, quite terrible to think of."

The Jesuit rose. There was Benediction at six o'clock that evening: it was time to go.

"Very well," said he. "I will tell Vincent whose son he is, and beg him for your sake to keep the matter to himself."

Mrs. King held out her hand. Somehow Father Robins failed to see it. Without a word he bowed and took his leave.

The woman waited until his footsteps had died away. Then, with a cry of mingled grief and anger, she gave way to a wild outburst of hysteria. She

beat her head and face upon the lounge, and wept with passion. A sense of outrage overwhelmed her: she, who had always held her head so high, to have a Sanyasi for a son! There was a rustling among the dry eucalyptus leaves that strewed the garden path, a quivering within the climbing roses which screened the veranda. With a snake-like wriggle, Pedro writhed his way all unobserved into the shelter of the servants' quarters. He needed time in which to digest the strange conversation he had overheard.

Velu paused by the lake side, and hearkened to the evening Angelus. He was dressed simply and modestly in new white muslin, his face was shaved, his locks were shorn away; few would have now recognized the erstwhile Sanyasi. To Velu, emaciated by long fasting, pale and tremulous, the Pulnaikanal road had proved a long and weary one. He would fain rest awhile by this gleaming stretch of water, dark and somber where it reflected the austere mountains, rosy-colored as an infant's cheek where sunset kissed it. From where he stood, the lights of the Pulnaikanal Club were clearly visible; one by one they appeared to meet the encroaching gloom. Behind and beyond twinkled the lamps of many a bungalow, inset in blue-gum boskets. Boats sped hither and thither athwart the lake, voices and laughter rang in Velu's ears, mingled with the plash of oars and tinkling drip of water. To him it appeared as unreal and unsubstantial as a mirage; his soul dwelt apart, far from this mundane show; he mused on other and far vaster matters.

He stood as long ago a disciple might have paused beside Gennesareth, and waited for the coming of his Lord. The little book which Vaughan had dropped and Velu had picked up from the beach,

spoke of a lake, maybe not unlike this, fisher folk and their Master: fishers who had given up all—wives, children, boats and nets to follow Him.

Renunciation—yes, Velu well understood their act and motive; he, too, had renounced all things for his deity. And yet they differed in their worship: he, the Sanyasi; they, the fishers. For albeit they had given up all for Jesus, Jesus had done yet more, had given Himself up for them, emptied Himself of Godhead, been stripped and scourged and crucified. Then—renouncing even renunciation—had gone back to God, to draw His followers God-ward.

The Word Made Flesh—the Resurrection and return to heaven—here was renunciation worthy of a God.

The deity of Velu had done naught like this. There had been no exchange of benefits between the Sadhu and his god, no grand heart bartering. Pain without profit, asceticism without love, death without life eternal—such had been the disciple's barren lot. Now, now at last, he saw its vanity.

A haze rose up from the lake, birds screamed from some reeds, and a dog barked. Velu turned away: the Angelus would guide him churchward.

Upon its throne, beneath a canopy of whitest drapery, above the snowy-curtained tabernacle, betwixt two worlds of whiteness stood the monstrance; tapers blazed about its royal and golden glory. It was the solemn hour of Benediction, and Father Robins incensed the sacred Host. A sweet-scented cloud hovered within the sanctuary. . . .

To eyes dilated and made visionary by prolonged fasting, the holy place appeared otherwise than it really was, or may be most truly as it really is. Velu, as he knelt within the open church door, was not aware of worshipers or illuminated altar—those

had either ceased to be, or merged into the All,
had vanished from human ken. Once more he saw
the Word Made Flesh, the Vision Splendid upon
whose breast the Heart of all humanity is burning.
And Velu, bowing to the earth, worshiped in speech-
less wonder the living, white-robed Son of God.

CHAPTER XV

IT is sometimes difficult to trace the causes which lead to the decline and fall of passion. Once alive, it is hard to subdue and kill; once dead, it knows of no spiritual resurrection, although the form and mode of expression may still survive—a living death. Probably the episode of Jinny's brief passionate experience ended—albeit she herself was unconscious of its collapse—before the honeymoon was over. Swiftly she discerned the change in Hamilton, due to the fact that he now knew what to be Eurasian means in India. His attitude became critical and hypersensitive, both toward herself and as regarded her work—even to the handling and treatment of her drawings and insect manipulation. He noted minute mannerisms and harmless indiscretions, traced flaws in her artistic finish and often destroyed work which formerly he would have declared exquisite. Jinny's health and spirits flagged under such criticism. When she returned to Pulnaikanal her youthful bloom was tarnished; brightness had fled from her eyes, and her mouth had a sad droop. Mrs. King was astonished at a distinct change in her daughter. Jinny was no longer perennially sweet-tempered, but often irritable and peevish; overwork had spoiled her pleasant, even disposition. For Hamilton daily pressed the claims of his *magnum opus*. Other biologists were carefully noting the relationship between insect and plant life. He desired to be first in his particular research, at least in the Indian field he had selected, and feared lest other enthusiasts should reach the goal before him. Idleness was therefore not to be tolerated; he saw no need for his wife to take more than mild walking exercise. Tennis was tabooed; a visit to friends or to the club

meant precious hours wasted. Had Jinny been an Odalisque, her seclusion could scarcely have been observed more strictly.

"She might as well have taken the veil," thought Grant bitterly.

It is true that for some time Jinny refused to work on Sunday. Generally she went to Mass; occasionally, mainly to please the ex-judge, she sang in the Protestant choir. But her voice suffered from the contraction of her chest in stooping over painting, and Grant no longer liked to hear her singing—it reminded him too much of that of a caged thrush.

Probably David Hamilton would have felt extremely angry had anyone accused him of being a past master of the sweating system, yet such he truly was. Not that he no longer loved Jinny; if she had lost all passion, he had not. Though not so beautiful a creature, still she appealed to him. But ambition was the real mistress of his affection, and would not be dethroned. Then, too, Jinny never complained to him, and never grumbled. If wearily, it was often gladly that she slaved away; happy on one count at least: her marriage had made her mother a supremely contented woman. Already Mrs. King was sewing at tiny garments; a mysterious smile hovered about her lips whenever she glanced at Jinny.

Thus life went on monotonously, but, on the whole, smoothly, until February, when a succession of unfortunate incidents occurred which really exasperated David Hamilton.

"I want to go away for a week or two, if you can spare me—you and mother," said Jinny one morning at the breakfast table.

"No; I certainly can't spare you," said her husband brusquely.

"Go away? Why, I never heard you propose such a thing before!" chimed Mrs. King. "Where on earth do you want to go to, Jinny?"

"To stay with Mrs. Bevan. She misses the children, and is quite alone now that her husband is in Madras, and she is very lonely."

"I am afraid she must endure it. We certainly can't be so altruistic as to lose you for her sake," laughed Hamilton.

Jinny flushed.

"It's not only on her account; I want a change myself."

"Well, this isn't the time of year for gadding about; you and I will go away together later on, my dear," said Hamilton, helping himself to coffee.

His wife's lips trembled.

"Oh, David, let me go!" she faltered. "I do want a rest so badly. My eyes are often painful, the work is so fine. And then there is another reason, I want time to think and to pray, David. Now-a-days I never have time even to read. Father Robins won't receive me into the Church until he has completed my instruction, and I must be received before the baby comes."

"Jinny!" Mrs. King was astonished and annoyed. "I thought you had given up all ideas of being a Romanist. Do you mean to say you are still having lessons from Father Robins? Well, of all the slyness!"

Jinny flushed, and bit her lip with vexation.

"I have had no 'lessons,' as you call them, since my marriage, I've had no time," she said with bitterness. "But David agreed to my reception into the Church after we were married. Nearly a year has gone."

"You'll have to wait now till after the baby comes," said David quietly. "You will be resting

then for a month, and unable to draw, and that will give you plenty of opportunity for reading. As for prayers—it's all nonsense to say you haven't time for praying. I observe you kneel down for at least ten minutes every morning and every evening."

"Exactly so!" agreed Mrs. King. She made a point of never opposing her handsome son-in-law.

"It's not enough. And how can I pray properly under your observation?" cried the young wife with trembling lips and overflowing eyes.

"For goodness' sake don't cry!" exclaimed Hamilton. "There are those beetles to sketch this morning, Jinny. They must be finished!"

To the amazement of Mrs. King, her once placid and patient daughter rose from the table with a strident laugh. Then, pressing her handkerchief to her lips, she hurriedly left the room, and ran with unsteady steps into her own apartment.

"She is actually hysterical!" observed the astounded husband. "Has Father Robins been bringing pressure to bear upon her, Mrs. King?"

"Oh, no! He never comes here, I should not permit it," replied the mother. "I had better go to Jinny, Mr. Hamilton, and speak to her. Poor child! It's just because her health is delicate. Generally she's such a dear sweet-tempered girl, so different from Clytie."

With an apology she followed Jinny, who had not attempted to lock her bedroom door, and David was left breakfasting in solitude.

This unexpected outburst of his wife's irritated the biologist. Thought he: "Blood will out, like murder. Scratch the Eurasian, and you find uncontrolled animal instincts ready to leap upon you." That Jinny had wished to go away and be quietly received into the Church was a matter of indiffer-

ence to her husband. He could not permit it, simply because such serious waste of valuable hours was inadmissible. He did not care two straws what religion his wife possessed; she might please herself as to that. Of course he would never consent to a child of his being brought up as a Catholic, unless the child unfortunately chanced to be a girl. Women and girls perhaps needed some form and ritual; men did not require it.

Hamilton was a negative atheist. He did not concern himself at all about spiritual fundamentals, he had no time for that, nor did he think that the ultimate truth about things had any connection with life and conduct. He was quite willing to admit the existence of God, but he did not see what this had to do with him personally. Perhaps it saved time to take to the line of least resistance, and to say yes, probably there was a God. In his heart of hearts Hamilton did not believe in anything that he could not see; the evidence of his own eyes was all he ever trusted. Once Jinny had thought that if she had been obliged to face opposition, she could have borne that better, and more bravely, than this indifference. Opposition stimulates: indifference depresses, it is enervating. Now she knew that she was too unstrung to face any conflict. Already she suffered acutely from the malarious spiritual atmosphere which surrounded her. Her soul had voluntarily taken up its abode in this dismal swamp. Her one fear, now that she had come to herself, and regained her normal senses, was that she should become spiritually acclimatized to her inferior surroundings; this would spell real disaster for her soul.

Her eyes had been opened to the nature of her affection for Hamilton. She had known that it rested intrinsically upon an unworthy, insecure foun-

dation, that it proceeded from mere vanity and self love, and had no other higher objective than itself. It was withering, and it had better die, rather than that her own higher nature should perish beneath its poisonous influence. Hitherto, she had faithfully carried out all the duties her husband imposed upon her, as far as she was able, but unfortunately the physical strain involved had wrought her nerves up to snapping point. The sight of the creatures she had to paint sickened and disgusted her.

So she lay sobbing upon her bed, regardless of the dire effect that tears would have upon her eyes. Jinny, the brave and tearless, had come to find in weeping a natural outlet and a consolation.

"My dear, don't take on so!"

It was her mother's voice.

"Don't be a silly, Jinny, but pull yourself together. Of course, you can't expect to leave us on a holiday, but I'm sure Mr. Hamilton would let you off duty if you asked him."

"Oh, mother, I am so tired!"

"That's only natural; I always felt the same. Next spring you'll feel all right. But if you take to fretting over trifles and giving way like this, I don't know what mayn't happen."

"David is so unkind; he has no consideration," faltered Jinny.

"Now that's all nonsense," rebuked her mother sternly. "You've got a good husband, Jinny, and it's wicked to make complaints. Look at the comforts he has showered upon us! I never was so happy in my life before as I am now."

Jinny got up, and allowed Mrs. King to sponge her face and rearrange her hair.

"I'm glad you are so satisfied, darling," she said presently, wreathing her arms about her mother's neck. "Marriage is worth while if it has consoled

you for the loss of poor father and my baby brother."

Mrs. King had the conscience to wince at that. She returned her daughter's kisses, and without a word they clung together for a little while. Then:

"Go to your husband, Jinny, and tell him you are sorry," said the mother firmly, and the girl, with her old obedience, did as she was told.

"Oh! it's all right," laughed Hamilton, kissing his wife. "Look here, you can't see to draw or dissect insects with those eyes of yours, you little goose! Get on your hat, and come out for a walk. There are some plants I want to hunt for in the hills. Iyerswamy is down with fever, so we must take Pedro with us."

The morning was cool and damp. Mists hung about the slopes, and the mountains wore heavy cloud-caps; fallen leaves made a thick malodorous carpet in the sholas. From the contour path Pembarganore showed like an island in a sea of fog.

"It looks horrible! Thank me for preventing your proposed visit, Jinny," said David gaily. "It really is a valley of the shadow in this wintry weather."

Jinny was obliged to confess that it did not look inviting; nevertheless, she yearned after the sympathetic companionship of Mrs. Bevan. At tiffin time Pedro unpacked the provisions they had brought with them, and in the shelter of a hillside cave they took refreshment. Afterward Hamilton examined the plant and insect specimens they had collected. Jinny leaned her back against the wall of the cavern, and closed her eyes, for she was weary.

All at once they were startled by a heavy roll of thunder, and lightning rent the patch of sky before the cave's mouth. Then down came rain in tor-

rents. Hamilton uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"That means the road home will be flooded," he said irritably. "And I badly wanted to get these specimens home before they fade."

"We can return by boat," suggested Jinny. "Old Thamburan Tholan will row us to the club."

"Then we must make haste; the boat will be crowded later in the afternoon."

"Missus must not walk through this heavy rain—better wait a little," suggested Pedro.

"My boots are thick, and the rain won't melt me, Pedro!" laughed the girl. Already the burst of thunder had relieved her headache, partially caused by the heavy and oppressive air; she felt much better.

Pedro collected the tiffin plates and packed them, grumbling as he did so. Personally he heartily disliked walking in the rain. Rain upset his temper and gave him ague. Certainly it was not an agreeable journey back to Pulnaikanal. The wind-swept hills were channeled by rushing streams, peaty and ill to cross. Rain, driven in wind-blown gusts, slapped at their hands and faces with angry sting. Then, on a sudden, there was a burst of hail which spat like bullets. No shelter showed, nothing could be done but press on through the tempest. But Hamilton did not grumble. His precious specimens were secure from injury in Pedro's basket, no harm would come to them. Neither did Jinny mind the furious storm. It soothed her nerves, now that it was no longer hidden and sulky, but outspoken; it braced her strength anew as she fought against it. And anything indeed was preferable to sitting indoors over endless painting. Every now and again she laughed aloud. Her gaiety amused Hamilton; this, thought he, was indeed a creature of impulse,

wild in her essential nature as a woodland animal.

At length, battered and sodden, they reached the lake side. The storm now abated with that suddenness which characterizes the rise and fall of tropical tempests; sunshine gleamed upon the approaching ferry-boat and on two white-robed, red-girdled Jesuits who were seated in it—Father Robins and a young native seminarist.

The priest greeted Hamilton and his wife, and made some trite remarks about the weather. They sat down opposite, and Pedro, after salaaming the Jesuits, curled himself up somewhere in the boat's bow; he shuddered visibly, and on a sudden grew pale.

The seminarist paid no attention to the passengers; his eyes were permanently lowered, his face was half averted. As Jinny glanced at him she felt sure that she had seen the youth before, but where she could not remember.

"I'm afraid that *bhoy's* in for a bout of fever," said Father Robins. "Natives cannot stand a wetting such as this storm entailed, and you yourself are soaked, Mrs. Hamilton!"

"Oh, it won't hurt me, Father!" answered the girl lightly; "but I quite forgot that a soaking upsets Pedro. I am so sorry!"

The servant's chattering teeth and bloodshot eyes signaled rapidly approaching fever. He glared angrily at Hamilton, whom he detested on account of his autocratic manners, and who was the cause of this agony of ague. However, he did not speak; he dared not, yet a desire for vengeance lurked in his heart.

The Jesuit's observation about his wife annoyed Hamilton; he felt that her name had been connected with that of Pedro. Did Father Robins class her along with natives? It would seem so! Of course

such an assumption was utterly without foundation, and absurd; but Hamilton was acutely sensitive about such matters.

Jinny's next action added fuel to the fire of indignation. To his amazement she leaned forward and addressed the seminarist eagerly.

"Ah, now I remember you quite well!" she uttered gladly. "Why, you are surely Velu, the Sanyasi?"

The young man raised his eyes, his dusky face paled visibly.

"Yes, madame," he answered. "As you say, I was once a Sanyasi; as you see, I am now a Christian."

"Oh, how interesting! Some day you must tell me all about it," cried the girl. "We once had quite a talk about religion."

Hamilton, veiling his intense annoyance under a guise of hauteur, laid his hand on her arm.

"My dear, do not talk to that young native," he said, beneath his breath, but audibly. "These seminarists are not supposed to converse with ladies."

Pedro heard, and instantly the road of vengeance unrolled itself before him. His fever-stricken mind resolved to tread it; prudence ceased to exist, he saw no madness in what he resolved to do, and do quickly.

The boat sped swiftly over the waters of the lake: Thamburan Tholan grounded it at the club landing-stage. The passengers disembarked; Father Robins and his companion made for a native hut where a sick man was lying; Hamilton and his wife turned toward their own bungalow, and Pedro followed.

"Poor Pedro, you are very feverish," said Jinny kindly to the shuddering servant.

"I will give him quinine at once," said Hamilton.

"Bring it to me quickly, master," said the boy. "I have something very important to say to master."

Hamilton, aroused by the man's strange, almost impudent bearing, stared at him narrowly. The feverish eyes which boldly met his own surely had madness in them.

"What is it you've got to tell me?"

Hamilton put the question impatiently. He disliked all natives; this shuddering, fever-stricken creature filled him with repugnance and disgust. He felt no pity for the misery he had himself occasioned by his selfish desire to keep the specimen plants from withering.

"It is about Miss Jinny and that Sanyasi," stammered Pedro. Quinine had slightly reduced his temperature; already he was beginning to be afraid.

"Confound your impudence! Explain at once!"

"Nothing. I mean nothing, I was only fevered."

Hamilton kicked the prostrate creature, and the insult sent the blood boiling and beating again in Pedro's veins.

"If missie speaks to him again, she will find out who he is, and what he is to her," he exclaimed hotly.

"Unless you tell me exactly what you mean, I'll get you beaten like a dog by Iyerswamy!" hissed the Englishman. He was pale with fury.

"Very well—do your worst, master! The Sadhu is her brother. Go ask the mem-sahib—she can't deny it!"

Pedro cowered. He had shot his bolt, had done his worst, and immediately realized his folly. Blows would be showered upon him, and he would be dismissed. Instead of that, Hamilton, though extremely white, was calm.

"You are speaking the truth, Pedro?"

"I swear it! Ask Father Robins. I heard him

talking to our missus about the Sadhu. She raved, and commanded him to keep the matter secret."

Hamilton turned on his heel without another word. Grim fury obsessed his soul. How he had been tricked into this marriage by Mrs. King! Her story of a murdered baby—and he had been fool enough to believe it! Murdered? No! She had hidden the thing away because it was too dark to be presentable. In her boy all the blackness in her blood had been concentrated; she was a pure-bred native posing as an East Indian. And Jinny's child—his child—supposing the strain came out in their offspring? It was possible—nay, highly probable—that his, Hamilton's first-born, would be as dark as soot! His soul sickened at the bare idea, even his body shuddered. For a moment he leaned against a pillar of the bungalow, quite overcome physically. He was too good a biologist to deceive himself.

"Are you ill, Mr. Hamilton?"

It was Mrs. King who asked the question anxiously. She had appeared on the veranda nicely dressed for tea. Jinny, who had changed her soaked garments and bathed, was probably resting in her apartment.

"Ill?"

Then, driven by a storm of tempestuous fury, beside himself, Hamilton poured forth all the venom with which he was surcharged. The words were coined at a white heat of passion and uttered as soon as coined; he did not raise his voice, almost indeed he whispered, yet the woman shrank from him in an extremity of utmost terror. Vainly she pleaded her ignorance as to her babe's existence, then the extenuating circumstances which had imposed silence on her.

"I haven't even seen him!" thus she excused herself.

"Unnatural mother!"

"Ah, but it was for your sake and Jinny's. But, hush, for pity's sake! Here comes Jinny—she must not know of this!"

Clad in a pretty dove-colored tea gown, her hair dressed in a high crown, her face serene, for the day's outing had been refreshing, the young wife appeared.

"Why, mother dear, how disturbed you look! Have you and David been quarreling?" she uttered in amazement. For neither Mrs. King nor Hamilton had had time to recover equanimity.

"Tell her!" cried David. "I insist that she shall be told the truth at once, and told by you!"

"Oh, Jinny!"

With a grievous cry, Mrs. King threw herself upon the veranda lounge, and buried her face in the cushion which had witnessed her distress after the memorable scene with Father Robins.

"Jinny, my heart is broken!"

In an instant the girl was on her knees beside the shrinking woman, uttering words of endearment and of tenderness, encouraging Mrs. King's broken and faltering confession.

"Actresses both!" growled Hamilton, as with a sneer he turned away in sheer disgust, and left them.

Indeed he was so grievously annoyed, that in spite of Iyerswamy being ill, he ordered the man instantly to pack his valise, and hire coolies to convey them both down the ghat. He left a note behind, telling Jinny that he had decided to go to Madras for a week, in order to visit the Museum. He left directions as to the work he expected her to get through in his absence.

CHAPTER XVI

IT is probable that if Hamilton had not beat such a hasty retreat from the scene of his humiliation, no breach would have occurred between himself and Jinny. The girl's mood when the story of Vincent was told to her by her mother, was one of sincere compassion for her husband. Fate had indeed used him badly; she realized to the full the shock he had sustained. If her own mother, whom she had idolized as perfect, found the idea of her son returned in native guise so utterly repugnant, was David's wrath and excessive misery surprising? Therefore, as love and pity ever go hand in hand, it was with a real sense of loss and disappointment that she found her husband had rushed off leaving only a curt note behind him. If she could have guessed his intention she would have stopped his flight, but her mother had demanded her attention for an hour or more after the scene between David and herself had taken place. She had clung to Jinny terrified, weeping and lamenting; time and much tact were needed before she was soothed, and restored to her normal state of serene egotism. David's censure was the chief cause of her distress—she feared a rupture with her son-in-law. As regards Vincent her mother's attitude was, to Jinny, incomprehensible. Her loyal heart refused to judge; to reproach, even in thought, was quite impossible; but the fact remained that Jinny's soul was shocked at the discovery of her mother's callousness. Nearly a year had elapsed since Mrs. King had received news of Vincent from Father Robins, yet she had made no attempt to see her son, rather she had carefully avoided him. Jinny refused to probe the matter

further, but, interiorly she was greatly affected. Her spirit withdrew from the temple wherein it had enshrined her mother, and walled up the entrance, so that those precincts should never more be trodden. Thereafter, steadily, unswervingly it resumed its God-ward trend which for awhile had been interrupted, until love was finally, in all its fulness, centered in Him alone. When Jinny discovered the absence of her husband, she wrote immediately to Father Robins, asking him to arrange a meeting between herself and Vincent, who was, she imagined, in the Pulnaikanal Seminary, and also as soon as possible to complete her instruction and receive her into the Church. Jinny had not to wait long for the priest's reply. He expected a visit from Vincent the following Saturday, would Mrs. Hamilton kindly call at the presbytery that afternoon?

Hamilton found plenty to interest him in Madras; so much so that, the weather in Pulnaikanal being at that season undesirable, and insect life dormant, he decided to remain on for another fortnight. He posted his intention to his wife, enclosing a fresh scheme of work to be completed in his unavoidable absence. Then he sat down and deliberately planned out a future for himself which should include Jinny as far as her artistic services were concerned, excluding her influence and personality, all intimate relationships and affections. He had brooded over his wrongs ever since his honeymoon, and now they had assumed such a gigantic size that his mind was obsessed and darkened by their malignant shadow. For a time, until Clytie returned to India, he supposed that, as a man of honor, he must abide by his promise to give a home to Mrs. King. Her services as a housekeeper were not to be despised, and Jinny's time was fully occupied in drawing. He planned out his *magnum opus*, its size, the time

it would take to complete the work. Thereafter—well, once it was finished he would be a free man again, and then farewell to India and domestic trouble.

Saturday afternoon was one of intermittent sunshine after a rainy morning. As Jinny passed through Pindar shola on her way to the presbytery, she paused to admire the rushing stream, with its many waterfalls, and the emerald green of dripping tree-ferns. The sun played at hide and seek through a tracery of leaves, and shone in fitful gleams on many a pool:

Spots

Toward which heaven itself had stooped
To kiss her sister earth's brown tear-stained cheek.

Ah, nature was indeed most beautiful. Jinny wished that her eyes were stronger and less painful, for then she would have gazed around her with even greater pleasure.

"Well, Jinny! I refuse to address a child like you by any formal name!"

The girl looked up startled, then placed her hand in Grant's.

"We haven't met for ages!" she exclaimed.

"No wonder. Caged birds can't fly about," said the old man smiling sadly.

"Oh, it's not as bad as all that," laughed Jinny. "But as a fact I generally am very busy. My husband is away in Madras for a week or so, and I am on my way to the presbytery. A very wonderful thing has happened, Mr. Grant; my brother, Vincent, has turned up all safe and sound. A merchant in Madura found and adopted him as a baby. He was given an excellent education, and is now a seminarist. This afternoon we are to be introduced to one another."

"Amazing indeed!" said Grant. "Your mother must be overwhelmed with joy."

"She has not seen him yet," faltered Jinny. "You see, the news upset her rather."

"Therefore she has not accompanied you," observed the ex-judge. "Well, give her my hearty congratulations; but perhaps the fact of his being a Catholic may rob her recovery of some of its natural pleasure. To you, I suppose, the fact means an added joy."

"It does," assented Jinny. "You know I hope to be received almost immediately."

"Lucky the boy was adopted by a native who was a Christian, it makes all the difference," said Grant.

Jinny did not deceive him. It was better to let him suppose so; there was no need for any one ever to know that Vincent was once a Sadhu.

"I want to ask Mrs. Bevan to let me stay with her for a week whilst David is away; do you think that she would like to have me?" questioned Jinny.

"I'm sure she'd be delighted. I'm going there now to call upon her, and I shall tell her your wish," answered Grant. "I suppose you have heard that Bevan is seldom in Madras now. A good thing, I dare say, for it must be intolerably lonely for Mrs. Bevan without her children. Well, good-by; I must not detain you, Jinny."

"Oh, Mr. Grant, stay a minute!" exclaimed the girl. "Will you try to find a place for Pedro? He is leaving us almost immediately for the plains: hill country gives him fever."

The old judge nodded, raised his hat, and went on his way.

"How dreadfully deceitful I am growing!" thought Jinny, sadly.

It was with a beating heart that she rang the

presbytery bell, and was admitted by the lay brother who was also sacristan.

"Father Robins expects you, madam, but at the moment he's engaged. If you will kindly step into the parlor, I will send your brother, Vincent, to you," said the man.

Simplicity and exquisite tidiness characterized the plain parlor with its bare-looking furniture and fixings. Nothing save a large crucifix broke the surface of the whitewashed wall. An open window showed the neat presbytery garden, with its great dark Wellingtonia. Jinny wondered how the sometime Sadhu endured the cramped limitation of civilization. Was he, too, a caged bird? Then she remembered that a year had elapsed since his conversion, by now he would have grown adaptable. Suddenly the afternoon sunshine blazed from behind a cloud. It gleamed on the crucifix which formed, as it were, the "point" of this shabby room, and threw the Figure into glowing prominence. The door opened, and Vincent entered.

Although extremely pale, the young man showed no trace of embarrassment or nervousness. Dignity sat on the clear countenance and thin cameo-cut features; it showed in his every movement.

Tears rushed into Jinny's eyes, for a moment emotion held her tongue-tied. Then, "Brother!" she cried, holding out both hands. He took them for a moment in his own.

"Please, be seated," he said, kindly. "It is most good of you to come and see me, sister."

"Ah, no, do not say that! You have been treated so coldly, I had almost said unjustly, but I cannot, will not, dare not judge our mother."

"Indeed no!" assented Vincent.

Jinny drew a small packet from her dress.

"This is your moonstone heart," she said brightly. "I fear it has been stolen from you too long. I

picked it up in the church one evening, a week before my marriage. Now it is yours again."

"It found its way into the church before I did," said Vincent, with a smile. He fingered it in silence.

"Are you happy?" asked Jinny presently.

"Entirely. And you, my sister?"

Her head drooped.

"So far I have not found happiness," she faltered.

"I shall find it, I hope, when I make my peace with God. You see, brother, up till now I have loved everybody too much, and God too little; now I am trying to love Him best of all."

"It is a great gift to be able to love at all: it is good to have a loving heart like yours," said Vincent, "but it is best to love everyone and everything in God. Love is not love unless it can be referred back to the divine Center."

"Do you remember our talk in the shola?" asked Jinny, shyly. "And have you given up all your old ideas, condemning them as wrong? I hope not, for I liked them."

Smiling, he shook his head.

"Renunciation was my quest then, it is my ideal now," said he. "But my soul, my will, and most of all my heart, are changed entirely. Religion is perceived now as a whole truth; then it was a broken falsehood. 'A lie which is half the truth is ever the blackest of lies.'"

"But why a broken falsehood?"

"It was all in little bits, and scattered. Each bit reflected some portion of divine truth; but when one tried to piece the bits together, falsehood resulted."

Jinny was silent for a moment. Then: "When will you come and see our mother?" she faltered anxiously.

"Does she wish to see me?"

"Yes, she does now—now that everyone will know about you."

"I see. Well, I will consult Father Robins. Here he comes."

The young man rose, and gave his chair to his superior. As he received no order to leave the room, he moved away to the window, out of earshot.

There was no need for many words between Jinny and Father Robins, and what was said is immaterial. Time pressed, as Saturday was always a busy day for the priest. Finally it was decided that Jinny should go for a week to Pembarganore, make, as it were, a spiritual retreat, and at its conclusion be received into the Church.

"Mrs. Bevan will help you, I am sure," said Father Robins. "She is a good woman—speak to her candidly about any difficulties you may meet with."

Finally Jinny pleaded for a visit from Vincent to his mother.

"Let Mrs. King come here to-morrow. Vincent is staying with me till to-morrow evening," said the priest. "It will be better in many ways that he should not go to her."

"May I accompany mother?" asked Jinny.

"I think it would be as well for her to come alone," was the reply.

In her heart Jinny assented to his wisdom. Unsupported, Mrs. King would probably be self-controlled and calm; hysteria seldom exists without sympathy. If Jinny came with her, there would be soft arms in which Mrs. King could collapse, should she desire to do so. Nobody, even an hysterical woman, could find any point of rest in the ascetic Vincent; there were no cushions in the presbytery.

As a matter of fact, the meeting between mother and son passed off quite well and calmly, without

any sentimental exhibition. The mother was pleased with her son's manners and gentlemanly appearance. True, he was dark, but then he had been a very dusky baby, and even when a soul and heart are changed by the Almighty, skin remains unaltered. It was a great relief to Mrs. King to find that her son did not intend to haunt her. She gathered that as a seminarist he seldom left the precincts of his college, and never paid ordinary calls. Mrs. King bemoaned the trouble which the re-appearance of her boy had occasioned in the case of Hamilton, but Vincent regarded David's anger lightly, saying that it would speedily evaporate, and things resume their ordinary peaceful course when once the effect of such a shock was spent.

"Ah, but you don't know Jinny's husband!" said the mother sadly, and Vincent certainly did not.

The programme as regards Jinny's reception into the Church was carried out in an entirely satisfactory manner. She made the week's retreat in peace, removed from all the worries of her home and arduous work, heedless of what Hamilton would say about such laziness on his return. In Constance Bevan she found help and strong, tender sympathy. Jinny's conversion sealed a friendship which, because it was built upon secure spiritual foundations, was supremely beneficial to both women. Belonging to eternal verity and love, it proved a deathless boon.

CHAPTER XVII

PULNAIKANAL society was greatly excited by the double event of Jinny's becoming a Catholic, and Vincent's appearance as a seminarist; the latter's state of social invisibility only further inflamed curiosity. Congratulations upon the recovery of her son were delicately offered to the mother with certain reservations. It was a sad pity that two of Mrs. King's children should be Papists.

Mr. and Mrs. Blair soon discovered a host of defects and changes in poor Jinny which had been overlooked or unperceived before.

"How she has altered!" exclaimed the clergyman to Mr. Grant, when the two were resting one evening in the club, after a game of billiards.

"In what way?" inquired the ex-judge.

"She has grown so independent, for one thing. Mr. Hamilton used to insist upon her drawing almost all day and every day, even on Sundays; extremely wrong, of course, but as she married an atheist she ought to take the consequences. Obedience she certainly owes to her husband in any case. Now she goes nearly every day to church, and twice on Sundays. Sometimes she looks in at the club, talks to the ladies—especially to Mrs. Vaughan—and is once more sociable. Some might consider her manner firmer and more resolute. I should call it by another name—devil-may-care expresses it exactly. It is extraordinary how rapidly those who are so weak as to be enticed into the Catholic fold change and deteriorate."

"Strength is neither weakness nor deterioration, Blair."

"No, but obstinacy is both. Jinny is obstinate. Her behavior to her mother is different also. She

used to be meek and docile, she is no longer. A sad, sad pity, Grant!"

The ex-judge laughed.

"Jinny has become a woman; she is grown up at last!" was all he said.

Their erstwhile friends speak truly when they affirm that converts are always changed persons. They are, and Jinny was no exception to the rule.

A plant prisoned in darkness is weak and sapless. Unable to rise erect, it twines its stem now round one support, now round another, for cling to some earthly creature the poor thing must. Take it out of its darkness into light: green flushes its etiolated organs instantly, the plant turns to the sun, and thence is filled with life and energy, upward it rises, strong and beautiful. Beneath its spreading branches creatures rest; it neither needs support nor shelter, rather bestows them. Jinny, too, had passed from darkness into light, and saw old things, as it were, new. Hitherto her life had been a gradual falling, with an occasional rise. Now was its time of recovery, of rising steadily. There is "a time to scatter and a time to gather." It was gathering time with Jinny. Constance Bevan had drawn up a rule of life for her, a very simple one, easy enough to follow; daily spiritual reading was included in it. She hoped Jinny would be able to keep to it when Hamilton returned, but had her fears. Fortunately the line he took made this quite easy.

He was absent nearly three weeks from Pulnainkanal. Once Jinny would have met him on his return with slight trepidation: now she was fearless. She greeted him with affection, and showed the work which she had finished in his absence.

"It is not all that you planned, but nearly all," she said. Then bravely and simply she spoke of

her brother; of the step she had taken; of her changed spiritual life. David heard in chilling silence all that she had to say, hiding behind a mask of coldness the acute annoyance which he felt. Then, when she had finished:

"You have taken a grave step secretly and deceitfully without consulting me," he said, speaking slowly, "and by so doing have shown you wish independence and freedom from my authority. Also you have gone out of your way to meet and greet a brother whose existence you knew I heartily deplored, and should have advised you to ignore if you had consulted me. Well, Jinny, take and keep the liberty you evidently crave, up to a certain point. I won't have your brother or Father Robins in my house, nor Mrs. Bevan; and you'll work six hours a day at the *magnum opus*. My book must come first—religious duties, as you call them, second."

Jinny was thunderstruck.

"I don't understand you, David, in the least. I don't want liberty and independence. I only wish to help and please you, dear. You agreed, before we married, that I could be a Catholic, and before you went to Madras—you didn't even tell me you intended going, David—I begged you to let me spend a week with Constance."

There was no answer. Hamilton was examining her drawings under a magnifying glass; his face was stony.

"I don't think I *can* work six hours a day; my eyes get so quickly tired," Jinny added.

"You will do as you are told," answered Hamilton. "If Mrs. Bevan can devise a daily rule for you, so can I. An excellent and laudable device. Henceforth, a time-table shall guide you, my dear Jinny. I will draw one up."

He docketed the drawings, made them into a

packet, and without so much as a backward glance at Jinny, left the room.

It is difficult to live with a couple who are estranged, and not take sides. Mrs. King threw in her lot with David, and did her best to weight the balance against Jinny. It was the simplest plan, if the least natural. It saved the mother from terrors and distresses, for she feared her hard son-in-law. Propitiation is easier than opposition where a man is concerned, and there was a strong strain of cringing native blood in Mrs. King. Jinny, as in the old days when Clytie ruled the roost, was once again "odd man out." As Mrs. King managed the house-keeping entirely, and David paid the bills, Jinny had no voice or interest in domestic matters. Her duties were resolved into one; they had been reduced and crystallized into one duty, comprised in painting and drawing, microscopical work, arduous and quite solitary.

And Jinny trod her *via dolorosa* bravely, cheerfully. Before the six hours of toil began she was at Mass; after they were concluded she would pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and then turn into the club, there to meet Mrs. Vaughan or Constance Bevan, and bask for a while in their cheery company. She had no intention of falling ill, there was another to think of urgently, beside herself; daily she longed for the hour to come when she would be a mother. Surely David and her mother would relent and be kind once more, when they saw her with a baby in her arms.

Mr. Grant halted at the railed-in cemetery and sighed. Opening the rusty gate, and brushing back nettles and datura—now all in bloom, for the season of flowers was once more come to Pulnaikanal

—he stooped over the flat stone which marked the resting-place of his wife and their small infant. Opening his pocket-knife, he scraped the moss-grown inscription till it shone forth clear again. Then he gathered a dewy bunch from the rosebush which hung above the tomb, and laid it on the name.

He was on his way home from church, from morning service, and his heart was sore, for Mrs. Blair had heard bad news of Jinny—it seemed that the poor girl had been taken suddenly and alarmingly ill. No doubt the news was true, for Dr. McIntyre—a most regular churchgoer—was absent. The ex-judge mused over many things as he leaned upon his stick; he prayed—imploring the intercession of his wife, though he really could not have explained why he did so—that Jinny might not die. His was an imaginative nature. Already he visualized the sweet girl in her coffin, wondered in which corner of the churchyard she would lie, and then suddenly remembered that Catholics were buried near their church.

"Ah! what a glorious singer she would have made!" he sighed. Thereat his conscience smote him so suddenly and acutely that he actually blushed. What a brute he felt! What brutes, what selfish villains he and Hamilton both were; yet how infinitely superior to the biologist he had often felt! Each had wanted Jinny—each selfishly and basely. Not for love—that would have been reasonable and fair—but for her talents. He had desired to see her on the stage, and gloat over his protégée's lovely voice; Hamilton had wanted her for the thing he called his *magnum opus*, a wretched book on insects, which would eventually stand dusty and neglected upon the topmost shelf of some library, dubbed not now quite up to date. Such was the ultimate fate of all books on natural science. And Jinny? Oh,

poor Jinny! What of her—what had she wanted? Like all women she had longed to be loved for herself alone, and to give all with both hands to the beloved lover.

"We are all unworthy of true love," thought Grant. "Only one is worthy, and that is God. She was very wise to take God as her soul's Lover in the end. *He* wanted her for herself."

Was it the end of Jinny? He hoped not, but feared almost too much to be able to rest his mind on hope. Leaving the graves, he started upon his melancholy homeward way, walking slowly, indifferent to all the glories of nature's resurrection which lay about him. Passing down the rhododendron avenue, now a mass of bloom, where he recalled his vision of Jinny as a shepherdess, he entered his spruce, dainty drawing-room. To his astonishment it was tenanted. Bevan, neatly dressed, but very seedy-looking, rose as he entered.

"An unexpected pleasure, I am sure," said Grant. "Of course, you'll stay to tiffin?"

"Thank you—yes," answered Bevan. His shifty eyes peered restlessly about the room, then wandered to the open window.

"Gad! Why, that devil's there!" he uttered hoarsely. "It's impossible for me to elude his vigilance"

"Whose?"

"Look! He's behind the rhododendrons!"

Grant looked where Bevan's shaky finger pointed.

Behind the bushes truly sat Alexander; his turban gleamed whitely among the dark green leafage.

"Follows me everywhere—dogs me day and night!" whispered Bevan.

"I thought he was Vaughan's servant," said the ex-judge, somewhat indiscreetly.

"He was—he's my wife's *bhoy* now. Vaughan

forced him into Constance's service when I was ill last year, and she has kept him ever since. Think of the immense cheek of such an action! That's Vaughan all over!"

Grant thought it wisest to make no remark. He shouted through the window for his servant, and, as he did so, saw Alexander slink away toward the back veranda.

"Tiffin at once!" said Grant when his servant appeared, salaaming.

In the dining-room Alexander appeared upon the scene just to lend a helping hand to the host's servant; this is a common practice in Indian households, and Grant saw nothing unusual in it. The soldierly-looking servant stood behind Bevan's chair, and handed various dishes to his master.

"You'll have whisky and soda, won't you?" said the ex-judge. "Excuse me for taking tea; I drink an inordinate amount of tea, you know."

He laughed. Everybody knew Grant's weakness for green tea—it was his hobby. He had a miniature tea plantation on his estate, and himself dried and prepared the leaves for use. The floor of a disused attic served as a drying room; multitudes of antiquated books were also stored there.

"It's poisonous stuff—give me a clean drink," said the pallid lawyer.

"Well, poison suits me best," said the old man. "I take it at every meal."

"Poisons are queer things, aren't they, now?" said Bevan. "In the days of the Borgias the art of poisoning was as much a hobby with men of culture as tea-growing and tea-drinking are with you. Wonderfully clever they were, too—wonderfully clever!"

Grant laughed again.

"I have an old work on poisons in my attic,"

he said blithely. "Perhaps you'd like to dip into it, Bevan?"

"Yes, I should," answered the other, so seriously and gravely that Grant was quite surprised.

"Well, come up-stairs after tiffin," said the little man. "I've got to turn my tea-leaves; you can turn up my old book."

"I was worried by a devil-owl last night," said Bevan. "They're horrid things. I don't wonder that the natives regard them with superstitious dread. It sighed outside my window like a dying man: made one's flesh creep to hear it. I'm a bad sleeper at the best of times."

"Have you good news of the children?" asked Grant, to change the subject.

"Oh, they're all right, better at home than here! Even my wife admits it now. By the way, she and old Mrs. Vaughan have managed to slip into Hamilton's bungalow to-day. The great man is staying in bachelor's quarters at the club, so they got into the forbidden land quite easily. I suppose they're praying over Mrs. H."

His flippant tone grated on Grant; it was abominable.

It was late in the afternoon before Bevan took his departure after a happy hunt in the attic for the book of poisons, whilst Grant was tea-leaf sifting.

"You have a treasure of wisdom in your old house, and this book is old and very valuable," said the lawyer. "I shall borrow it for a long while, probably."

"I shall make a note of the loan," answered Grant sagely. He escorted his guest as far as the garden-gate, and was about to say good-by, when he perceived Pedro, who had not yet found a fresh situation, coming hurriedly toward him.

His heart sank at the expectation of bad news.

"Well?" he questioned. "What is your message, Pedro?"

"Miss Jinny is doing nicely," said the servant with a grin of delight and pride. "She has a boy. I saw the baby, master. It is very tiny, with yellow curls like doré Hamilton."

"Thank God!" said Grant huskily; a load of misery was lifted from his mind.

Bevan mistook the old man's exclamation.

"Yes, it's a mercy the baby doesn't take after the Gomez grandfather!" he said.

To Grant, the roses exhaled a sweeter odor than ever that Sunday evening; nature smiled happily into the old man's eyes. He was joyous because Jinny had passed well through her ordeal, and nature—they who deny the truth are strangers to her—is ever most sympathetic with our moods. Gathering a spray of heliotrope, he pressed it to his lips; then, seeking an outlet for his overflowing heart, he skipped into his drawing-room, and opened the piano. Soon one of the grandest of *Te Deum* settings flew from beneath his fingers: an incense of harmony and praise filled the room.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Rajah and Ranee of Aneimalei ranked high among the most enlightened of Indian rulers, and Aneimalei was a model state. Rather an estate than a province, it occupied a very small slip of fertile land, every inch of which was irrigated and fully cultivated. Its people were prosperous and therefore contented, and well behaved. Left an orphan in his infancy, the Rajah had been brought up under the strict surveillance of an intelligent dewan, who after marrying him to an infant princess belonging to a neighboring state, sent the boy off at once to England to be educated. He also persuaded the parents of the bride to follow his example when a suitable chaperon had been found. Thus the royal pair were trained on such similar lines that their prospects of married happiness were practically assured; their ideals would be alike, their taste in common. The Rajah and Ranee did not meet whilst they were in England, but letters were secretly exchanged, and also photographs. When the Prince returned to the East to take up his duties as a potentate from the hands of the dying dewan, he agreed that the Princess should remain a year longer in the West; this would give her time to complete her studies. The Ranee's name was Lila-vati; to her intimates she was known as Lily. The woman movement began whilst she was in England. The Princess was caught up into its enthusiasms, but wisely kept her head; had prudence to judge between what was right and what exaggerated in the revolution, and thus committed herself to none of its follies or indiscretions. Her native chaperon, like all wise Hindu guardians, had by precept, in-

struction, discipline and example taught the girl a high ideal of womanhood. Purdah was not customary in Aneimalei, but even where it is in vogue, as was the case in Lilavati's native state, Indian ladies have always kept in touch with a multitude of outside interests; visit, entertain, and go on pilgrimage. The Ranee's chaperon was therefore by no means a narrow-minded person. Lilavati realized that until the women of India are raised to the level of intelligence which their men have already attained, social progress must halt indefinitely. Therefore she planned a great increase of girls' schools in Aneimalei, of course under the management of women teachers. Much social spade work had to be done; the Government could not undertake the thankless task; it must be done by the natives themselves, and Lilavati resolved to be a leader. Yet having been wisely instructed, she never dreamed of independent labor. She would work under the guidance of her husband. Hindu wives hold their spouses in holy veneration, and Lilavati was no exception to the rule. Man is always the head of wife and house in India, but nothing is ever done in the domestic life without the wife's knowledge and advice. Hindus regard the marriage tie as sacramental and mystical, a bond which even death cannot dissolve. Betrothal even is irrevocable. In olden days girls were not married until the age of consent; there was nothing against the marriage of widows in the holy books. The Ranee hoped that these ancient principles would one day be revived, but at present custom forbade their introduction. Custom rules India; it is its framework. Only when women themselves demand their repeal will the laws be altered; meanwhile custom sways even religion.

The friendship which began in England between Lilavati and Clytie was founded upon the "views"

they held in common. The Ranee soon assumed the rôle of Lady Bountiful; once under the shelter of the Princess' wing Clytie lacked nothing. Together they returned to India, where, after the performance of religious ceremonies, the Ranee immediately began her married life. Clytie, as Durbar physician, was given a suite of apartments in the palace. No sooner had she arrived in Aneimalei—this was about three years after Jinny's marriage—than with the Ranee's consent she wrote to her mother, offering her a home in the royal palace. Somewhat to her indignation, Mrs. King declined the offer, pleading her domestic responsibilities, and—which most of all riled Clytie—the absorbing and ever-increasing interest in her small grandson Cyril.

"Ah!" thought the girl bitterly. "I might as well have remained in England for all my family cares. After my four years' absence my mother refuses to come and stay with me!"

She chewed the cud of this reflection bitterly. Jinny was preferred before her, simply because she happened to be married, and to possess a baby.

She glanced round the beautiful apartment which she occupied, one of a charming suite. It grieved her particular self-love and pride that none of her own family should see her in all her glory; hers was a shorn triumph. The window by which she read her mother's letter opened, French fashion, into a lovely garden with a large stone reservoir and playing fountain. It was a part of the palace grounds which the Princess had dubbed her Physick Garden, for it contained valuable medicinal herbs and shrubs. She was a great believer in nature's cures, in spite of Clytie's assertion that the natural system worked by way of poisons, and only threw in the antidote as an afterthought.

The furnishing of the palace was a subtle blend

of all the best in Eastern and Western tastes; simplicity was its keynote, for the Ranee had resolved to live on the same lines as her humble brethren, and if her spiritual plane was higher, well, she would stoop to conquer and raise them up to it, almost without their knowledge.

As Clytie brooded over her fancied wrongs, the purdah which served as a door to her sitting-room was pushed aside, and the Ranee entered.

Lilavati practised an extreme simplicity of dress, except upon state occasions when etiquette demanded extensive ornament and rich attire. She was gowned in a plain white silk robe edged with gold; over her parted hair she wore a veil; her only ornaments were golden anklets, and the iron gilt bangle, which in India represents a wedding-ring. The Ranee was small, and as delicately formed as a Tanagra figurine; her color scheme was Persian, rather than Indian, in its softness; certainly her skin was fairer far than Clytie's. The latter rose as the Princess entered, and came toward her.

"Oh, Lily, I am so disappointed!" she exclaimed. "Mama declines your invitation."

The Princess raised her delicate eyebrows in surprise, and said:

"I wonder why?"

"Read the letter, please," said Clytie. "See what she says."

The Ranee sat down upon the divan, and drew her friend beside her. Swiftly she conned the apologetic note.

"Oh! it is natural," she said, quietly. "The baby must mean so much—her only grandson! Grandmothers are adorers always, and especially the widowed. I can quite understand. But surely Mr. Hamilton will soon return to England, and take

your sister and their boy with him? Then, dear, you shall have your mother here. But now, Clytie, I came to tell you we are to have a visitor. It is not customary for native ladies to receive gentlemen, but the Rajah and I are determined, in all possible ways, to keep up our English customs. Let us therefore go into the drawing-room; you shall be my chaperon, and also pour out tea."

Rising, the Princess took her friend's hand in her own, and together they stepped through the French window on to a wide veranda which communicated with the state apartment.

The Rajah and his visitor, a tall grey-haired Englishman, in dark blue uniform, were chatting together when Lilavati and Clytie entered the beautifully designed and admirably decorated reception-room, where tea already waited, laid out upon a table of cedar and inlaid ivory. Two muslin-robed domestics salaamed in lowly fashion as the Rancee entered with her companion. The Rajah remained seated, but the Englishman naturally rose and bowed to the Princess, who after a few words of greeting sat down at a little distance from her consort, when she introduced Clytie to the officer as, "My lady doctor."

Clytie gazed for a moment in speechless amazement at the smiling visitor; a thrill of joy and excitement, blended with passionate anger, swept through her being. Her face flushed to a warm crimson under its dusky pallor; then swiftly paled.

"Mr. Vaughan! Why, how astonishing!" she exclaimed; then held out her hand quite frankly. "But I am delighted that we meet again!"

The Rancee smiled.

"I kept the secret well, did I not?" said she. "I knew what old friends you were, for Mr. Vaughan had already spoken about you and your dear ones,

to the Rajah; so I prepared a little surprise for you, Clytie. You see, already you have an English friend in Aneimalei. Now, please pour out the tea."

Vaughan followed the girl to the tea-poy, and chatted as she busied herself with plates and cups.

"So you are back again among us all," he said brightly. "Now you're a full-blown lady doctor, I stand in awe of you!"

"We have built a woman's hospital and lecture-room for her," said the Rajah. "Great things in the medical line are in progress here, I can assure you. We intend to make great strides in female education generally."

"Splendid!" said Vaughan. "You have an immense field of usefulness, already white to harvest, waiting for you, Miss King."

"Have you seen the hospital and girls' schools?" asked Clytie smiling.

"Not yet. I have only just arrived, loaned by the British Government for a month or two."

"The Rajah opens the hospital and one school tomorrow," said the girl. "You will be there, of course."

"In my capacity as head of police I shall, most certainly," answered Vaughan.

Shortly afterward he took his leave, and Clytie, excusing herself, returned to her sitting-room.

She threw herself upon the divan, and lay quite still for awhile. Her color came and went; she breathed quickly. Her heart could not deny the fact that it still loved Philip. Taking a hand mirror from the table, she scanned her features long and critically. Yes, she was handsome and attractive, a woman whom men admired. She had received one or two proposals when in England, and she had refused them, deeming her heart dead, too dead to

accept affection. Now her old passion for Vaughan had returned with renewed strength. How should she treat its rejuvenescence—kill, or indulge it? She laughed aloud, self-confidently.

"Ah! I will win him yet!" she assured herself.

So small was Aneimalei, so remote from the Empire's highway, that few Englishmen visited the part. As practically the only ones in the palace, Vaughan and Clytie were naturally attracted to each others' company. Clytie had learned to ride when she was at school. Vaughan found a mount for her, and, his duties in Aneimalei being very light, rode out with her every morning before breakfast. The Rancee encouraged the growth of this renewal of an old friendship, and Philip frequently took tea with the lady doctor, either on the veranda of her private suite, or in the palace mango orchard, where a charming summer-house had been put up. Of course, Lilavati never dreamed of Clytie's love for Philip. She believed her friend to be consecrated to a work which excluded all idea of marriage, because it was all-absorbing in itself; and again, the difference between their ages and their religions appeared to the Princess to be a barrier. She really knew very little about Christianity; it did not interest her very much, but from what she had heard said in England, she had been led to suppose that Catholics did not marry Protestants; spiritually speaking, they belonged to different castes.

Nor was Philip vain enough to suppose that Clytie accepted his intentions in any but a purely friendly spirit. Here, thought he, was a woman devoted heart and soul to her profession; a feminist who kindly tolerated and was willing to hold out a hand of equality and fraternity to men, but who had no more to offer. He admired Miss King, and thought

of her as a splendid woman, a grand social missionary.

Clytie, as the days passed by, forgot the sense of grievance she had so long and bitterly harbored in her heart. The miasmic clouds which had darkened and poisoned her mind were lifted; her soul rejoiced and expanded in love's warm sunshine. Of course she was too clever to deceive herself; she knew that Vaughan did not love her yet; but that this would come in time she had no doubt. If Philip had been heart whole, very likely all that Clytie desired would have come to pass, but Constance was shrined immovably in his heart—she was the one and only woman in the world to him.

After the morning ride, under a dawn-flushed sky—a ride which lent sweetness and strength to the whole busy day—Clytie breakfasted, and then began her work, which was truly very dear to her. There was the hospital to visit, there were women lecturers and teachers to interview, private patients to attend, native doctors of the sterner sex to face and argue with. Also, she had to learn and accustom herself to her duties, to the native mode of life and thought in which she lived; and here the Rancee was her instructress and her guide. Clytie soon realized that duty is the keynote of the Indian woman's life. She works hard all day, beginning and ending its trivial round with a short prayer, said in the kitchen, the best apartment of her house, a cook-room and an oratory all in one. It communicates with other rooms which open on to an inner veranda where cows and calves are stabled.

One afternoon Clytie paid a visit to such a native dwelling, whose mistress was ill with fever. Its blank wall faced the street; through a narrow opening she passed into a quadrangle where stood a small center altar with a pot of holy basil set upon it;

thence through an open courtyard to the veranda. Here her steps were arrested by a pretty sight. A small white cow was there, garlanded with jasmine; evidently it had been recently introduced to its new quarters, for it gazed about with strained, anxious eyes, lowing at intervals. Beside the creature sat Sita, the little daughter of the house. She caressed the cow's white hoofs, and laid scented flowers about them, softly murmuring endearments.

"Why, Sita, this is a new member of the family! What a beauty!" said Clytie.

"She is to be my adopted mother; I am her fostering," answered the child. "If I sit beside her long enough, she will believe truly I am her child; then, when the time comes to milk her, she will yield all to me."

The little maiden had probably sat for some hours beside the cow, for every now and then the animal, grown accustomed to her presence, licked the child's shoulders, as if it questioned whether this were its offspring.

"And your mother—is she better?"

"Yes, doctor missie, already she has bathed, and now is at the well drawing water."

"I am glad," said Clytie. "Tell her to send for me if the pain should return."

"Our neighbor's husband was taken very ill last night," observed Sita. "Perhaps doctor missie might call there."

"I will," replied Clytie.

The man in question was infirm and often ailing; his old wife was too aged to look after his health as carefully as was required.

As Clytie entered the adjoining house, two men, the married sons of the sick man, made a salaam, and hastily pushed in before her. They were field laborers, who had evidently left their work in a

hurry on having been summoned home. A small boy, with a greasy flapping top-knot of coarse hair, ran at their heels like a puppy.

"Old Paramu is dying," said he cheerfully. "I ran to give the news."

And now the sound of wailing could be heard. Paramu's wife was expressing her grief in poignant accents. Clytie walked quickly into the house; surely something could be done for the poor sufferer! He lay stretched on a pallet bed in a room, void of furniture, opening on to the veranda and inner courtyard, upon whose sun-baked mud crows hopped in the blazing heat and chattered loudly with brazen caws. Beside the bed crouched the old wife, a withered, wizened figure with disheveled hair and ragged clothing. A crowd of women sympathizers jostled about her, elbowing one another. In their anxiety to see the last of old Paramu they crowded round the moribund man, keeping away the air for which his panting, exhausted lungs were craving. These human ghouls chattered as noisily and boldly as the crows.

As Clytie paused on the threshold of the room, she saw the old man's two sons stoop and lift the miserable creature by his feet and shoulders.

"Stop!" cried the girl, "or you will kill him!"

But they paid no heed. With heartless rapidity they raised the groaning man, and pushing through the jabbering women, bore him into the courtyard, and laid his quivering form upon the hard, scorching earth. Then they stood still, wiped their hot brows, and glared with stony defiance at the lady doctor.

Clytie's heart beat swift with anger; she was furious at the sight of such amazing cruelty. All her professional instincts acutely outraged, she turned to the old wife, who now crouched by her husband, still pressed in by the crowd.

"Why did you permit it?" Clytie asked angrily.

"He would have lived some hours indoors; now he is in his agony, poor soul, and what an agony!"

"It is the custom of the country," wailed the hag. "The house would have suffered pollution had he died therein; earth is too holy—nothing can pollute our mother earth."

With set teeth and clenched hands, Clytie stood awhile and watched the anguish she could not assuage. A crow hopped boldly on to the old man's leg; beneath his feet there was a tiny opening in the sun-baked floor, through which an insect crawled. It stood for a moment as though on the lookout; then the prospector signaled with its antennae to a crowd of hidden followers. Up they swarmed in excitement; soon Paramu's body was alive with ants that the on-lookers tried in vain to drive away. The crows cawed with excitement; the women gabbled. Shuddering with aversion and disgust, Clytie left the revolting scene. "Custom," forsooth! It was the curse of India.

Old Paramu's body was burnt at the ghat at sundown. Sita ran there to see the show after she had milked the new cow, which yielded its milk abundantly to the little maid.

Paramu's eldest son, as chief mourner, wore a disarranged garment, and had already allowed his hair and beard to grow; his ugly face looked very black and stubbly. He walked three times around his father's blazing pyre, carrying a pitcher of water in his hand. Finally, he dashed the vessel upon the earth, crying:

"Thus is the pitcher broken; dust returns to earth as it was."

As Sita watched the hungry flames licking up all that remained of Paramu, she wondered at the fate of man, whose beginning as a puny babe, whose end as a feeble, creeping, half-blind thing, she so often

witnessed. Her childish mind tried to grasp the mystery of life, and failed. Humanity was bound to some great wheel of destiny, whose axle was veiled in space, whose rim as it swept the earth, suffered man just to touch the world ere he was caught onward and upward again into the unknown, to be downward swung again as the wheel revolved. A holy Sadhu, resting by the well, had thus once spoken to his disciples, and Sita, reposing with her pitcher, had hearkened and very literally understood. The night which followed upon that holy talk found the child studying the starry vault of heaven, searching for the axle of her destiny. She decided that the great Southern Cross must be its pin and center; the rim and spokes were too vast for eye to see. She felt no pity for old Paramu; he was at rest, freed from the ants and crows and the chattering crowd of females. Why grieve to see that substance—which is but a shadow of the real—pass into glowing ashes?

Bones are its rafters and its beams,
Tendons and nerves its scores and seams.
Blood is its mortar, and the skin,
Frail covering, roofs the mansion in.
Its occupants are age and woe,
Decay and death are sure as slow.
Right gladly should the vital spark,
The soul, *renounce* a home so dark.
Birds at their pleasure quit the tree:
Who leaves the world alone is free.*

*Translated into English from the original by Sir J. D. Rees.

CHAPTER XIX

A WIDE flight of rather shallow steps led up into the palace veranda, with its curved roof supported by delicately carved shafts of teakwood. This veranda formed an antechamber to the drawing-room, which had a flat, balustraded roof. The palace gardens were large and beautifully kept. Great papaw and banyan trees formed shadow-pools in a yellow blaze of sunlight; flame of the forest waved flowery gold and scarlet banners athwart the pale blue heavens; a champak in full bloom lent wondrous sweetness to every passing breeze. And in the center of this colored scented wonderland was a large stone reservoir where fountains played and goldfish sported amid a forest of round lotus stems. Wide, plate-like leaves lay outspread upon the water's surface, pearls of blossom were scattered among the shiny greenery. In the noontide stillness the garden appeared enchanted.

The only human being who gazed at its sleeping beauty stood silent upon the palace steps, as though he feared to break the spell which nature had woven round that silent spot. Vincent was still a priest of nature, and tread her courts with awe and reverence; to him she was always the holy child of God. The sunshine poured on his white habit, lending it radiancy; he had removed his topee, and his feet were merely sandaled. A peon, dozing upon the veranda, instantly imagined him to be a fellow native. Springing to his feet, without troubling to put on his turban, he called out sharply:

"What are you doing here upon the palace steps? Go round to the back entrance instantly!"

Vincent assumed his wide hat and approached the

man, who, realizing his mistake, promptly clapped on his turban.

"I wish to see Miss King. Take my card to her, please," said Vincent quietly.

"If master will follow me to missie's sitting-room, I will find the ayah," replied the peon.

Clytie's ayah sat betel-chewing upon the veranda which communicated with Clytie's bedroom.

"Missie is asleep; the master must wait till three o'clock, when I take tea in to missie," said the woman sleepily. The message was communicated to the visitor by the palace peon.

"I will remain outside until three o'clock," said Vincent. Taking a rosary and small book from his pocket, he left the veranda for the herb garden, and slowly paced its paths.

"A holy man," observed the peon. "I thought he was a native until he spoke."

"He is Eurasian; one of the Catholic padres from Pulnaikanal," replied the ayah yawning. She had been in service in the hills.

The peon gazed respectfully if drowsily at Vincent. Hindus revere priesthood as manhood's highest type; the Holy Grail of purity and renunciation, however dimly visioned, is Hinduism's quest. Then he turned to rest once more in the palace doorway.

At half-past three Clytie emerged from her room and went into the garden. She stood, slightly aloof, watching her brother, who now, seated beneath the shadow of a tree, was reading. Presently, raising his eyes, Vincent saw the girl and stood up to receive her greeting. He realized in a flash that here was an entirely different personage from Jinny. He need expect no affection from this sister, and he was relieved, for he did not desire it. Her eyes held him at arms' length; critically, coldly, repugnantly she regarded him. Then:

"Why have you come to see me?" she inquired.

"I was sent here for a few days' holiday," answered Vincent, "with a letter from my Superior to the Rajah. I thought it best perhaps to see you first, and ask you to introduce me to his Highness. Also I wish to speak with you about our sister who, I grieve to say, is far from well."

"Sit down," said Clytie.

She threw herself upon a garden bench and tapped the ground impatiently with one small, well-shod foot. The inopportune arrival of Vincent annoyed her. Unaware of the old friendship which existed between him and Vaughan, she imagined the policeman's disgust when she introduced this dusky individual as her brother. Surely any attraction which Philip might feel toward her would shrink in the presence of such an undesirable relation. Vincent was obviously a native; his absurd garb accentuated his natural darkness; she regarded it as a ridiculous dress even at the best of times and on a European.

"The Rajah will be giving audiences in half an hour, when any peon can take you to him," said Clytie coldly.

"Good! Then we can have a talk till then, can we not?" said her brother. "But, please may I have a cup of tea? I am rather thirsty."

The girl flushed. She felt ashamed of her want of hospitality. In her selfishness she had entirely overlooked another's needs.

"Of course! I will have tea brought at once for you," she said in kindlier accents, then called a servant and gave him her order.

A tea-poy was soon brought, also cakes and tea. Clytie allowed her brother to serve himself. Crows came and hopped close to his feet, boldly demanding food; he threw them scraps of cake.

"And what is wrong with Jinny?" said Clytie presently.

"Everything—humanly speaking," answered her brother. "She has grown piteously thin; her eyes are overstrained and failing rapidly. Then, obviously, her marriage is unhappy."

Clytie shrugged her shoulders.

"And what can I do in the matter?" she inquired.

"Could you perhaps not come and stay a few days in Pulnaikanal? Then you could see her, and, perhaps, speak to Mr. Hamilton; ask him to let Jinny have more freedom, more leisure and less work."

"Jinny was always fond of painting."

"You can have too much even of what you like," said Vincent. "Then, too, our sister is lonely. Our mother devotes herself to Mr. Hamilton and the little boy, and turns a cold shoulder to poor Jinny. Our sister is still young; youth needs friendship and affection; some brightness in its surroundings. The poor girl is a slave to labor. Nature is beautiful, but when anyone has the heartache as poor Jinny has, it cannot be cured by gazing perpetually on moths and beetles, and lovely blossoms. Nature is not enough."

"I thought Jinny had 'got religion,'" said Clytie spitefully.

"True; but even religion is not, and should not be, all-sufficing in such a case as this. Jinny is not a nun. She is a married woman, a mother, and a daughter. Marriage was ordained for friendship, service, and mutual help. Our women here in India passionately reverence their husbands because the husband's attitude is one of measureless protection. Hamilton never speaks to nor looks at Jinny except to give her orders; she has no leisure in which to love her child; our mother even is cold to her. So Jinny pines away. They think so highly of you—Hamilton and our mother—a word from you would have weight. Will you not speak it?"

Before Clytie could reply, the Ranee, who loved to walk in the herb garden in the afternoon, appeared before them. She seemed to float upon them suddenly from behind a great clump of trumpet-blossoming datura, a tiny white-robed figure, half veiled and wholly gracious.

"The Princess!" Clytie rose and introduced her brother.

"Be seated, please," said Lilavati gently, and herself took a chair.

"My brother has a letter of introduction to the Rajah," explained Clytie. "Perhaps his Highness will see him now?"

"Yes—and here," smiled Lilavati. "My husband has nobody to interview to-day. We are going for a drive instead in our new carriage. But here comes the Rajah."

A young man strolled into the garden. He was dressed in flannels and carried a tennis racquet. There was something strenuous, eager and elastic about this well-groomed, athletic fellow who, fairer even than the Ranee, might have passed anywhere for an English gentleman.

After a few words of greeting the Rajah sat down by Vincent, opened and read the letter of introduction.

"This is from the Superior of the Jesuit College in Pulnaikanal," he said, turning to the Ranee. "It appears that they would like to start a mission here, with my consent. How does the idea strike you, Lilavati?"

"I see no objection," answered the Princess. "And you would be one of the missionaries?" she said, turning to Vincent. "You are, I suppose, a priest?"

"No, madam, I have only just taken my first vows."

"But, when you are made a priest, perhaps you will come here?"

"Madam, I cannot say."

The Ranee thoughtfully scrutinized the young man's open face.

"I hope you will," said she. "For you, having lived all your life among the natives, would clearly understand the Hindu mind. You would do much good. Of course, I am not a Christian, and I have read very little about the Faith, but I know that Christians worship the highest ideal of womanhood—a divine Virgin Mother. Her we also worship. What if they call her by one name, and we call her by another? Notionally she surely is the same. If you want to reach and touch the Hindu heart and soul, present this mother to it; let her be the gate of heaven. Have no fear; they will understand both her and you. Yet, why indeed should I speak thus to you who understand already?"

Drawing her veil about her, the Princess rose and bowed to her husband and to Vincent.

"Come," she said to Clytie. "Let us take a turn about the garden. Then I must dress to go out for a drive."

As they paced up and down, Clytie told the Ranee Vincent's report of Jinny.

"But I, what can I do?" she protested.

"The matter is quite simple," said Lilavati. "My husband has decided that we all go to Pulnaikanal as soon as the hot weather sets in. Then you shall see your mother and sister, Clytie."

The girl's heart fell. She had no desire to quit Aneimalei and Philip Vaughan, whose daily companionship when they rode out together was very sweet to her. The Ranee noted the distress in Clytie's face, but wrongly guessed its cause.

"The hospital will get on very well under your nurses till we return," she said. "By the way, the

Rajah has asked the Government to let Mr. Vaughan accompany us to Pulnaikanal, and permission has been given.

Clytie's heart bounded again.

"Oh, yes, I can trust my staff," she answered, "and, after all, we shall need a change when the heat sets in."

Dawn flushed the saffron sky with blue and crimson streamers; birds twittered; bull-frogs and cicadas, which had drummed and thrilled all night in harsh orchestra, were at last silent. A beggar, who had chanted his prayers before a wayside shrine until the stars had set, now sank to sleep at last on earth's breast. Life moved in streets and on the country roads. The Hindu lifted his heart in the morning offering, greeting his Creator with the sunrise.

Hail, earth and sky and heaven,
Hail, kindly light,
Illuminator of our purblind sight.*

Followed bodily ablution, carefully and sacramentally performed, for each action of Hindu life involves and includes prayer. In every household, after prayer and bathing, flowers must be laid upon the altar and also about the feet of her who counts as household mother, grandame or wife, as the case may be. For in India mother-worship, based upon and produced by the absolute inviolability of marriage, is a very real, very touching thing. The tie between mother and child is the strongest tie in the East, where motherhood is sacred. That marriage is indeed a happy one where the husband can call his wife "my mother," and rest in the shadow of her friendship until he passes ultimately to repose within the arms of the eternal Mother, which rest is his Nirvana.

Clytie was up and dressed by sunrise. After a cup of tea she went round to the palace porch, where a syce waited with her horse. She mounted, dismissed the servant, and set out for the town. Past the bazaar, where merchants were taking down their shutters, and where crowds of crows quarreled hoarsely, she trotted into and along a country road shaded by banyan trees toward a rest-house, her usual meeting-place with Vaughan. On either side of the way, beyond the shady trees, stretched hot, dry country, with here and there a well or water tank. Hedges of prickly pear and screw pine divided the arable land into patches of indigo, linseed, hemp, or millet, as the case might be.

All looked flat and uninteresting till the eye sighted the distant hills, thin, ghostly, shadowy grey in the morning light.

Vaughan was waiting on horseback beside the rest-house. He raised his topee as Clytie trotted up.

"I hear that your brother is staying at the travelers' bungalow," said he as they rode down the road together. "If we call there on our way back I'll ask him to breakfast with me." Then, noting the girl's look of surprise, "I know him well," he said. "I knew him as a boy in Madura. Didn't your sister tell you?"

Clytie shook her head. She flushed with sheer relief, then faltered: "It's horrid for us both to have a brother who is a native almost."

"Oh, but Vincent is a splendid fellow, and half a saint already," expostulated Philip.

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, I'm glad that *you* don't mind," she said. "It caused unpleasantness and an open rupture between my sister and her husband. Naturally, he objected to a native for his brother-in-law. Some men are built like that."

"Quite absurd of him!" exclaimed Vaughan. "Especially, as he need never cross Vincent's path unless he chooses."

"Then you don't think less of me because I am an Eurasian?" said Clytie softly.

Their horses were abreast. Beneath her sun hat she peered expectantly into his face.

"Of course not."

As Vaughan answered, his eyes met hers; there was an expression in their depths which not even the humblest and least self-assured of men could have mistaken.

"We have grown to be great friends, haven't we?" said Clytie, tenderly.

"It's a friendship of old standing," replied Vaughan, with a genial laugh. "I've known you ever since you were in short frocks, and regard myself in an avuncular light, Miss Clytie."

The girl flicked her horse, and it bounded forward. She had hoped to guide the talk along more intimate lines, but Vaughan had avoided the valley of sentiment and stuck to the arid plains of commonplace. Nevertheless, Clytie was not discouraged. Convinced that, unconsciously to himself, Philip really regarded her in a tender light, she was prepared to await the sunrise of his love in patience. Mrs. Vaughan had died in the winter which preceded Clytie's return to India. Therefore, the greatest obstacle in the girl's path having been removed, her way was plain enough and really easy now.

The sun now arose. Its golden light-shafts pierced through the avenue of banyan trees and bathed the whole countryside in warmth and dazzling radiance.

Vaughan and Clytie turned their horses' heads

homeward; the coolness of the morning was over now.

Between the open country and the town was a large well, whence the townsfolk drew water in the morning and at evening. It was a rude shaft or pit scooped out of the red clay above a spring, uncemented, unguarded by any wall or barrier. A hedge of prickly pear protected it from animals, or rather saved them from tumbling into it. As Vaughan and Clytie approached the spot they heard a sudden scream, and saw a woman rush into the enclosure of prickly pear and run around the well apparently in anguish.

"Aie-yoh! aie-yoh!" she shrieked at intervals.

The creature was all alone in her agony, for the drawers of water had long since filled their vessels and returned home. Only a wheeling kite witnessed the woman's woe from its high place in the blue vault of sunlit sky.

"A snake must have bitten her!" cried Clytie.

At a hand-gallop the riders dashed up to the spot and dismounted. Vaughan caught the woman as she tore like one demented round the pit's mouth and held her till Clytie joined him.

"Where are you bitten?" asked the girl.

"Aie-yoh! Aie-yoh!"

"Oh, do be quiet, woman! Show me the place. It must be cut out at once. Why, you are Sita's mother! I thought I knew your face."

With bloodshot, distended eyes and hands that opened and shut spasmodically, the woman stood still at last, a picture of living horror. Then——

"Aie-yoh!" she shrieked in wilder accents. "My Sita's drowned! Look down, and you will see her in the well! She came here to draw water before day-dawn, and never returned. Aie-yoh!"

Vaughan had already tied the horses by their bridles to the hedge. Stooping upon the shiny, slip-

pery brink, he stared into the black water. A bundle, mud-stained, unrecognizable as human, floated there.

And now, drawn by the piercing shrieks, whose cause he rightly guessed, a white-robed man came running down the road, followed by a small crowd of excited natives. The sun shone on their bronzed, oily limbs and streaming hair. One held a rope coiled, like a huge serpent, round his brawny arm.

"There's help at last!" said Vaughan.

"Too late, I fear," said Clytie. "The child must have been dead an hour or more before we came upon the scene."

In the presence of help and sympathy, the strength which had hitherto upheld the bereaved mother now oozed away. She slowly collapsed into a heap upon the dusty ground, and still gazing toward the well sat shuddering and moaning; she had no power left to scream. Also, at last she realized the futility of clamor.

The crowd of helpers now reached the spot. As they approached, Vaughan saw that Vincent was their leader; the travelers' bungalow was close at hand.

"Are we in time?" asked the seminarist, calmly.

"No, too late—a little girl is drowned. She must have fallen in before sunrise," answered Vaughan. "Now we must get up the body."

The policeman's presence controlled the excited, chattering crowd of natives. He sent one running off for a couple of sub-inspectors and a country cart, as an inquest would have to be held on Sita's body; others he directed to knot the rope's end firmly about the prickly pear, whilst some held and guided the coil to the pit's mouth, whence the strongest man had volunteered to climb down into the depths.

Vincent moved quickly toward his sister who stood, in her white-coated riding-habit, a little dis-

tance from the exhausted mother. She flicked her foot almost impatiently with her riding-crop. There was no medical or even first aid required, and she hated any emotional or tragic scene. Here science could do nothing. Of sympathy she possessed little; she did not understand its simple uses.

Therefore the mother sat alone, apart, a figure of awful tragic lonesomeness.

"Speak to her, do!" said Vincent.

Clytie shrugged her shoulders.

"What could I say? The child is dead, and that's the end of everything. Tell Mr. Vaughan I am going home; it's frightfully hot, and there's no shade here," she answered.

Then, turning round, she unloosed her horse, and prepared to mount it. Suddenly she appeared to remember something, for, withdrawing her foot from the stirrup, she paused and said to the crouched woman:

"Are you in pain?"

The bereaved mother shook her head.

"No, I feel nothing—nothing at all," she muttered gloomily.

Then Clytie sprang into the saddle, and let her horse trot homeward.

The natives kept their feet at a careful distance from the well's mouth, craned their heads forward, and watched with keen interest the recovery of Sita's sodden body—an interest kept silent merely because they feared the presence of the policeman. When the body was brought out of the abyss and flung upon the dust by its rescuer, a groan arose.

It lay there, tumbled and untidy, covered with dark rank slime. The crowd ringed it round in solemn silence, the wheeling silent kite kept watch incessantly. Thus for a moment, then the mother rose and crept toward her dead child, fearful of touching the drowned shape, which was now the

treasure-trove of the police, a subject for an inquest.

The seminarist whispered a few words to Vaughan, who nodded. Stooping down to the woman, Vincent said gently:

"The cart won't be here yet. The child is yours till then."

The woman's haggard face and stony eyes stared into the young man's countenance. For a moment she scarcely gathered the meaning of his words. Then she understood, and, kneeling, tenderly wiped the wet ooze from Sita's tiny face, drying the soft black hair with her own shoulder cloth.

"May the good God comfort you!" said Vincent, laying his hand upon the woman's head.

At his touch the frozen floodgates of her grief melted, and she wept freely.

"Oh, man of God!" she sobbed, knowing by intuition her sympathizer's standing. "Where is my Sita gone? For this is not my darling."

"Be comforted. The Mother of God has wrapped her sari around your child, and laid Sita to sleep upon her gentle bosom," answered the young man softly.

An expression of hope and peace flowed over the softened features of the weeping mother. Kneeling, she softly stroked her darling's rounded cheeks.

On her return from the morning ride, Clytie bathed and breakfasted. Her meals were always solitary, served by the ayah's husband, a man called Rama. This morning her table was put upon the veranda. The *bhoy* arranged it, placed coffee, toast and eggs within easy reach, and a small nosegay of fresh-plucked blossoms in the finger-bowl. Then he addressed her:

"His Highness entertains a fakir who is on a pilgrimage, and halts here for a few days. His Highness wishes missie to come to the interior

veranda of the palace at eleven o'clock, and see the fakir's power."

"Tell the Rajah that I will come," said Clytie.

The man salaamed and retired. Clytie ate slowly; she never hurried over anything. Then, calling the ayah, Clytie bade her bring gloves and hat, for after breakfast she had to go to the hospital.

"Who is this fakir, ayah?" asked Clytie, as she drew on her gauntlet gloves.

"Covindasamy, missie; a great magician from the South."

"Can he draw horoscopes?"

"I think not, missie, but he knows both past and future; he is a very holy man."

Clytie fastened her gloves thoughtfully. Then she walked into the garden, and took a short cut to the hospital.

At eleven o'clock the Rajah, with the Ranee and members of the Rajah's family—uncles, aunts and cousins—together with his suite, assembled in one of the inner courtyards of the palace to see the wonder-worker from the South. When Clytie reached the veranda, the fakir was already there, seated tailor-fashion upon the cement floor. His seven-knotted stick was laid beside him. He was extremely lean; his face wore an expression of fixed repose; his staring eyes resembled those of a deep-water fish. The Rajah, who wore a half Eastern dress, sat down in an armchair, and greeted the ascetic in the man's own southern tongue; his entourage, with the exception of the Ranee, remained standing. In response to the salutation the fakir rose, bowing, with both palms pressed against his forehead.

"Covindasamy greets the Rajah," he replied. "Ganesa, the god of travelers, has led him thither."

"I hear you are very powerful," said the Rajah. "Show me some marvels."

"The fakir has no power; the demons work for him," said the ascetic.

He sat down again, put his seven-knotted stick, emblem of asceticism and its attendant power, between his crossed legs, and lifted up his arms. There followed more marvelous conjuring tricks than these wanderers usually exhibit. A pot, half filled with earth taken from a termite's nest, was placed in front of him. In this was buried a papaw seed selected by the Rajah, a long piece of muslin was thrown across the pot, propped up like the canvas of a miniature tent by a short stick. Whilst awaiting the seed's development, the fakir exhibited his uncanny power by causing a brass vessel, filled to the brim with water, to move of its own accord across the cement pavement. He made flowers fly from a jasmine shrub within the courtyard and cluster crown-wise upon the Ranee's head; and leaves danced processionally upon the veranda floor.

Clytie regarded these wonders with amazement, which was the greater because the worker of them appeared dead all the while. He sat there, sunk in a deep cataleptic sleep, which endured for two whole hours. His arms were raised vertically above his head, his glazed and staring eyes were fixed upon her own. Behind his gaunt form shone the palace courtyard, white with blinding sunshine; the hot air danced and shimmered all about him. Those half-dead eyes were filled with magnetism. To Clytie, presently, everything seemed to whirl, including the fakir. Then she saw him rise, and still in his squatting posture, stiff as a bronze image, sit in mid-air a foot or two above the ground. The audience was held as dumb as she herself; even the clamor of the crows had ceased; nature kept a solemn silence.

Suddenly the fakir regained possession of his senses. He stood erect, and once more salaamed the Rajah; then, signaling the audience to approach,

he removed the muslin cover from the flower-pot, and showed a young papaw stem eight inches high. To assure the witnesses that there was no deception in the matter, he scooped out the seed, and let the Rajah see certain marks which he himself had made upon it before it was buried. Papaw seeds take fifteen days to germinate.

Clytie's head ached very badly; she still felt dazed and worried by these inexplicable tricks; her mind was attracted by such mystery, and longed to probe it. Stooping, she whispered to her ayah, and the woman nodded.

"Yes, I will arrange for missie to see the holy man alone," said she.

"Are you fatigued?" inquired the Rajah of the ascetic.

"The fakir's body is never tired; it is a slave bound to obedience," was the reply.

"You may go and take your rice; I trust it pleases you," said the Rajah.

"It is good. Salaam doré."

"Salaam tambi."

The ascetic rose, and, leaving the veranda, sought his own apartment, a temporary thatched hut in the palace grounds.

The night was moonless; across the velvet pall of darkness which blotted out the garden, fire-flies flitted. Clytie's bedroom was illuminated by a coconut-oil lamp, hung from a bronze chain, and shrouded in a clear crystal glass. The tatties which screened her apartment from the veranda were all lowered except one. On the threshold of this opening stood a small copper furnace of burning charcoal; beside it lay a bronze plate of fragrant powder. The girl sat in an armchair well within her room; her eyes stared into the deep exterior darkness. Suddenly she started; her vigil was rewarded. The fakir ap-

appeared on the veranda, soundless, motionless, scarcely visible; he stood like an ebon image, a genie who waited upon her commands. Clytie moistened her dry lips; all at once she felt very nervous.

"Salaam," she said hoarsely. Then, speaking hurriedly: "I want you to show me my future," she explained. "Also, there is someone I love very dearly. I wish to know whether he returns my affection. Do you understand?"

Without replying, the fakir sat down in his usual posture beside the furnace and began to mutter incantations, the while his eyes stared out of the blackness into Clytie's. His form was scarcely visible, his eyes and face shone luminously in the charcoal's glare. He threw some of the scented powder upon the glowing embers, and a cloud rose which temporarily veiled his features. At first it was only a puff of smoky incense, but presently it changed, and became opaque and bright as a polished mirror. Within it shapes rose and fell. As Clytie gazed she saw scenes from the past unrolled before her in a shadow dance; these vanished, and the countenance of Philip Vaughan appeared within the cloud. It was pale and death-like, with its closed eyes and parted lips. Then Clytie realized that the face was that of a man asleep and in danger, but not unprotected; a woman with steadfast eyes guarded his slumbering spirit: her hand was averted against Clytie.

The fakir threw powder into the furnace, the cloud dispersed, and dense smoke filled Clytie's room. Out of the murk came the fakir's voice, clear, yet half whispering:

"I fear the lady never will share rice with him," he murmured, "for death lurks about. Yet he is protected. Hath she who speaks of love ever desired his death?"

"Never!"

"His death is forever in another's mind," in-

sisted the ascetic. "Death, conquering, may divide you."

"Who is the woman?" faltered Clytie.

"The fakir saw no woman."

"How do you make the visions come and go?" she questioned.

"Covindasamy does nothing," answered the ascetic. "That which the lady sees is what the demons show, or her own 'I' within her. The fakir is the servant of greater powers than he, even as his own body is the fakir's slave."

"Can you, or the powers you speak of, compel that man to love me?" asked Clytie, boldly now that the fakir could not be seen.

"The powers serve their servants only," was the reply. "No English lady would ever do puja to my masters."

"To gain *his* love I will," answered the girl. "I am not truly English, holy man. My grandmother was rocked in the cradle of a plantain leaf; her blood, with all its Eastern warmth, throbs in my heart."

As she spoke, the smoke cleared away. The fakir was once more visible, and clearly now, for dawn was in the distance. An atmosphere of extraordinary blue limpidity filled the house and garden; within it swam the fakir and the glowing furnace, both darkly evil; the rigid eyes and lips of the ascetic leered as though demons lurked behind the thin mask-like countenance.

"Lady, go with Lakshmi, the Hindu ayah, to the temple, and she will show you where and how to worship," said the fakir.

Then he rose, and without further word or salutation disappeared. A cool wind blew from the garden into Clytie's face; birds whispered sibilantly about the expectant sunrise.

CHAPTER XX

THE Rajah and Rancee left Ancimalei when the hot weather began, and, accompanied by Philip Vaughan, Clytie and some of their servants, went up to Pulnaikanal. A large house, not far from the club, happened to be empty; in it the Prince and Princess with their suite were comfortably quartered. It was now the height of the Pulnaikanal season, and Clytie fully appreciated the triumphal nature of her home-coming. She had returned to her friends as a notable success; her vanity was gratified, especially as rumor had flown ahead, coupling her name with that of Philip, and asserting that already they were secretly engaged. Fate had certainly thrown the two very much together. Somehow or other the air of Ancimalei had suddenly ceased to suit Vaughan; he suffered from attacks of malaria, accompanied by a sense of fatigue and general inertia. As there was no European doctor in the place, the Rajah had insisted that Clytie should prescribe for Philip. This brought the two a step further in their friendship, and lent it a delicate, subtle intimacy. When Clytie told the Rajah that the site of the policeman's bungalow was unhealthy, the Rajah immediately gave him apartments in the palace. There—well understanding the unconventional ways of English people—he ordered that their meals should be served at the same table. They rode and drove out together, and played tennis or walked in the palace gardens. Thus there was a sort of foundation for the Pulnaikanal report that Philip Vaughan was going to marry Clytie. The girl was surprised that as yet he had made her no proposal.

It was with a swiftly beating heart that, shortly after her arrival in the hills, Clytie, decked out in very dainty raiment, set off to pay a visit to her old home. How familiar, yet how strange the place seemed! It was far tidier than of yore; the garden hedge was clipped, the paths were weeded and well graveled, the flower-beds were exquisite. The cluster roses no longer trailed at random; their stems were fastened to the clean whitewashed bungalow. Upon the veranda Clytie saw her mother playing with a lovely, lily-white little boy, whose flaxen hair shone pure as silk-worm's silk. Mrs. King was elegantly gowned in a white lace tea gown; she wore her black hair like a jet coronal. Recognizing the approaching figure, she stretched out her hands, crying "Clytie!" and came to meet her daughter. Mother and child embraced silently but warmly.

"Ah! how beautiful you are, my dear!" said Mrs. King proudly, holding the girl a little way from her; then, drawing her hand within her own, she led her to the veranda.

"Come, Cyril, this is your auntie," she said to the little boy.

Clytie stooped and kissed the flaxen head.

"And where is Jinny?" she inquired, seating herself gracefully upon the cane lounge.

The words were scarcely spoken when the drawing-room screen was opened, and Jinny came slowly forward, shading her eyes with a thin, nervous hand that slightly trembled. Simply dressed in a pale blue cotton gown without any ornament, her hair knotted low down upon her neck, and parted on the forehead, she looked girlish and insignificant. Clytie saw at once that she was very pale, her chest had sunk, and she stooped a little, her cheeks had lost their roundness. Clytie thought that she looked like a tired dressmaker's assistant. Choking with

emotion, Jinny kissed her sister; she could not speak, and yet her eyes were tearless.

"Shall we go in?" suggested Mrs. King. "The light out here will hurt Jinny's eyes, and tea is quite ready in the drawing-room. Cyril, you may run away now to ayah."

The little boy picked up a ball which he had thrown down on seeing Clytie, and made his escape. He had taken no notice of Jinny; evidently he was accustomed to obey his grandmother.

"Oh, Clytie, dear, how grand you look!" said Jinny presently, when they were at tea. "Your dress is lovely, and what a perfect hat! Nobody could ever think you had done hard mental work; you have blossomed so nobly."

"I am sorry I can't return the compliment; you look quite dreadful, Jinny!"

"Hush!" exclaimed their mother. "I hear David coming."

Hamilton lounged in awkwardly. He was dressed in a grey flannel suit, his hair was rough and unkempt, his fingers were inky.

"Delighted to see you again, Doctor," he said acidly to Clytie, who, disregarding his bitter tone, laughed gaily. Then, turning to Jinny, he asked: "Well, did you finish the drawing of that aphid?"

Jinny nodded.

"Then the *magnum opus* is completed!" observed Hamilton. "Thank goodness!"

"Finished?" gasped Mrs. King.

Hamilton thrust his hands into his trouser pockets.

"Yes, and now Jinny needn't do any more work, and I can go home," he said.

Mrs. King blanched visibly, but she made no remark, only she shot an appealing glance at Clytie.

"I seemed to have turned up at an important crisis," said the girl laughing.

"You have," said Hamilton, quite seriously. "I enjoyed the work enormously at first," he went on, "but gradually it has bored me. I am glad it is over, and I can leave a country which I detest. I must have a chat with you, Doctor, about your mother's and sister's future; between us we ought to be able to settle something. If you have finished tea, suppose we adjourn to my sanctum."

Mrs. King looked uncomfortable and perplexed; Jinny sat silent, her hands rested listlessly upon her lap, her eyes were lowered. It was an intense relief to know that her laborious tasks were ended, but she was too numbed with weariness to feel any joy in relaxation.

Hamilton's study was as slovenly as the man himself. Indian life has a deteriorating effect upon some natures; the biologist had fallen into untidy ways. Clytie was astonished and somewhat disgusted by the change she perceived in him.

He cleared a space upon his littered table, motioned Clytie to a chair, whilst he took another; opening a drawer he brought out a pile of lovely book illustrations, and showed them to the girl, who admired them warmly.

"Yes, Jinny has worked well," Hamilton admitted. "And she deserves a rest. Suppose you take her and your mother back to Aneimalei when I go home with Cyril? Could it be managed?"

"If they will come," said Clytie dubiously.

"They must," said Hamilton. "I can't afford to keep up this establishment when I go home. The journey will be expensive, with the boy and ayah, and the publication of my book entails a serious outlay. Of course, I will make a proper allowance for Jinny, but I can't support your mother; my means are limited."

Clytie's pricked pride was up in arms at once.

"Mother is not a pauper, neither am I," she said hotly. "We do not need your help."

"I'm glad to hear it," answered Hamilton.

"When you have a home ready for her, Jinny will follow you and Cyril, I suppose," said Clytie, after a pause in which she regained her temper.

"I am not so sure of that," said Hamilton. "I propose to stay with my mother. She lives in Edinburgh, and I doubt the climate suiting Jinny."

"But you won't be always with your mother, I suppose?"

"Until she dies; then the house becomes mine. It is to all intents and purposes my home," said the biologist.

Putting the drawings carefully together, he replaced them in the drawer. His manner was calm and business-like. Clytie was dumbfounded by his bland impudence. He intended to separate himself permanently from Jinny; that was evident. Such an act of injustice to her sister was not only monstrous, but insulting to herself, Clytie. She felt hot with indignation and offended dignity, but thought what a fool poor Jinny must be, thus easily to lose her husband's love. Incidentally her stupidity cast a reflection upon them all; socially she would be scorned as a neglected, unwanted wife, and her family would have to bear the world's derision. Clytie wondered how Philip Vaughan would think about it. She made up her mind what to say, and said it.

"I am quite willing to give mama a home," she said, proudly. "I've already begged her to come and live with me. But I can't ask the Rance to receive Jinny also, and there are no bungalows for English ladies in Aneimalei. Jinny is too young to live alone in India, so you *must* take her home. I don't suppose Edinburgh will be too cold for her."

Hamilton turned slightly in his chair; his face was now in shadow, and his eyes were cast down.

"My mother is a very proud old lady," he said slowly and quietly. "She would not accept a half-caste daughter."

Clytie clasped her hands spasmodically.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed. "You have insulted me!"

"You should have thought out the results of your clever scheming when you laid plans to catch me for your sister," answered Hamilton. "I have longed for the day when we should meet again, Miss Clytie, and the day has come. You knew I was ignorant of your native ancestry, and you played upon my unfortunate want of knowledge, arranged for me to be your mother's paying guest, advising her that I was quite a catch! For years you schemed to get your sister married, failed in Grant's case, but succeeded in mine quite neatly. I am willing to provide for Jinny, but I refuse to live with a half-caste wife. Now you, who love to direct your family, can arrange affairs. I leave them in your hands."

He rose to show that the interview was over, and Clytie got up too. Her face was livid, and her eyes were distended; with difficulty she restrained herself from striking Hamilton.

"You are a fiend!" she hissed. "I pity my poor sister for ever marrying you, but do not imagine that you are going to have your own way. I shall oppose you; look upon me henceforth as an enemy. I shall seek legal advice for Jinny."

"She won't thank you," he said drily. "But in any case, there is no need to make a fuss. I remain here for the season. When I go home, Jinny won't try to follow."

"But—the boy?" faltered Clytie. This man's coldness froze her.

"He is my boy, not yours," said the biologist.

Jinny had so long lost her native liberty that, when it was so suddenly restored to her, she, like a hapless, newly freed prisoner, knew not what use to make of it, and almost wished herself tied and bound once more. She would have liked to play with Cyril, but the poor boy did not understand the sudden freedom of his always "busy mummy," and stared in amazement when she timidly suggested a game of ball.

Then Clytie emerged from David's study and let loose the vials of her pent-up wrath on Jinny. What had she done, demanded Clytie, to estrange her husband? Why had she allowed him to make a mere slave of her? Men despised slaves. She scorned her sister as mean-spirited and weak when she showed no resentment, either at this attack or upon hearing the news of Hamilton's planned departure with the boy.

"I don't believe you care for any one, not even Cyril, you take the thing so quietly," stormed Clytie.

And Jinny, bowing her head beneath this tempest of contempt and rage, made no reply. Clytie's temper had always been borne with, never opposed; also she was too tired to care very much about anything. She had always known that Cyril must go to England. As she had never been allowed to tend the boy—her mother had from his birth monopolized him—his little being had never been really twined round her own. Nor did she dispute Mrs. King's right to Cyril. She had promised the first-born to her mother, before her marriage, the offering had been accepted; it had been a willing, loving sacrifice. If Mrs. King liked to dispute David's right to remove Cyril, she must do so by herself; Jinny would not attempt such a hopeless task. She felt, in a numb, listless way, sorry for her mother.

So Clytie, having expended the whirlwind of her wrath, presently swept away, and Jinny was left alone in the side veranda. She leaned her cheek upon her hand, and let her glance wander through the rose trellis into the flower garden, a sheet of mauve, gold and crimson, for heliotrope, zinnias and roses were in full bloom now. It was a very restful vision, but she was in no mood for mental repose, although so tired. She lay down upon the lounge, and, taking up a volume of Shakespeare, she idly opened its pages, and scanned the lines:

Oh! spare mine eyes!

She did not see the context, for at that moment her brain seemed rent across with agony. Her right hand fell nerveless at her side, and all grew black. She heard a shriek, but did not realize that it was herself who had emitted it; then she lost consciousness.

Hamilton, who was standing in the garden outside his study window, heard the scream. Strangely enough that moment, which was one of crisis in Jinny's life, was also full of import for himself. A post peon, padding swiftly up the path, thrust a yellow cablegram into his hand. Hamilton tore it open, and read the penciled lines. His mother was ill, and demanded his return to England instantly. Rushing into the bungalow, he called his servant, and bade him make rapid preparations for instant departure. Cyril and the ayah must accompany them. He blessed the bad news which meant release for himself from a burden which had grown intolerable; the fates had played into his hands; gladly he accepted the freedom which they offered.

Whilst Jinny lay unconscious and unheeded upon the side veranda, behind the screen of roses, tumult filled the whole bungalow. Mrs. King's misery and wrath at the prospect of a sudden parting with her

loved grandson were violent, but impotent to change the course which events had taken. Hamilton snatched a hasty dinner, but she refused food, and rocked Cyril upon her bosom until he was literally torn away. At nightfall Hamilton, with his child and servant, left Pulnaikanal, and Mrs. King gave way to a grief as wild as it was inconsolable. About midnight she roused herself, all at once remembered Jinny, and wondered where she was. She sought her in her bedroom, but the room was empty, and terror seized her lest the girl should have done something desperate. Then she saw that the lounge on the veranda was occupied. Within the shadow of the roses Mrs. King found her daughter, cold, death-like, and damp with night dews. Summoning her own ayah, and Pedro, who had never left Mrs. King's service, she had Jinny carried indoors and laid upon her bed. Then Pedro was sent running for Dr. McIntyre; whether Jinny were alive or dead, her mother was unable to decide. She ascribed her daughter's condition to grief anent Hamilton's and Cyril's going; no doubt David had told her suddenly and roughly of the bad news from Scotland. She longed to have Clytie summoned to her aid, but dared not send for her.

Jinny awakened into a world that seemed strange, blank and silent; a warm darkness lay all about her. She put out one hand, and felt the soft cool coverlet of her bed. Then someone took her hand, and pressed it tenderly.

"Speak, please," said Jinny. "I am wide awake."

"It is I, Constance," came the reply in a hushed voice.

"Why are you here at night?" asked Jinny. "Have I been ill?"

"Yes, but you're getting better. You've been feverish and light-headed for several days."

"And you have nursed me! Oh, how good of you, dear! But do light a candle or a lamp, and open the windows, please. They must be shuttered, it's so very dark and warm."

Her hand was pressed more closely; she heard a sigh.

"Do light up!" insisted Jinny, and then suddenly she felt bright warmth strike upon her.

"Why, that feels just like sunshine!" she exclaimed.

"It is sunshine," answered Mrs. Bevan. "Jinny, darling, you are in my bungalow, not in yours,; you are in the room which was the children's nursery. It is midday, not midnight, dear."

"But—Constance! I do not understand!"

Gently and truly her friend told her. How Hamilton, on receipt of bad news about his mother, had gone away with Cyril; how Mrs. King had found her, Jinny, unconscious upon the veranda; how she had been so overwhelmed with grief at the loss of Cyril, that Clytie had taken her to the Rajah's bungalow.

"And then I had you brought down here to me," said Constance.

"And it is day time," faltered Jinny. "Day time and darkness! Constance, am I blind?"

"Yes, darling, for the present you have lost your sight," said Mrs. Bevan. "But it *may* return. You have had a severe nervous breakdown, Jinny, and the optic nerves are affected."

"I remember now," said Jinny. "I was reading Shakespeare, when there came awful, blinding, rending pain, all through my head, like lightning. . . . So David has gone—and Cyril."

She lay there for a while quite quiet, and very still. Then:

"I feel so strange. Am I going to die?" she asked.
 "I don't mind if I am, so you may tell me."

"No, Jinny, you will get well, but it may take some time."

"But, Constance, if I am in for a long illness, I ought to be in my own home," protested Jinny.
 "Why should you be burdened with another invalid?"

She alluded to Bevan, whose habits and broken health often gave rise to much anxiety.

"My dear, you are most welcome here; I am glad of a companion," answered Mrs. Bevan. "Tomorrow I hope you will be able to sit up for an hour or so."

"But of what use am I whilst I am blind?" said Jinny. "I shall be rather a burden than a companion."

"You mustn't argue, or you'll get feverish," said Mrs. Bevan. "Clytie has closed the bungalow, so home you can't go, my dear. Stay here till Mr. Hamilton makes arrangements for you to join him."

A sudden fit of nervous shivering seized Jinny; her teeth chattered.

"God help me if I must live alone in England with David!" she protested. "I would rather die than endure such exile. Still—God's will be done."

"Hush! Worry no more about it. He won't be sending for you yet awhile," answered her friend. "Meanwhile rest quietly here, dear Jinny. I love to have you."

The girl stretched out her arms, and drew the kind face, which she knew was near, although she could not see it, close down to her own.

"Then I will stay till I am well again," she whispered. "It's a good thing mother has Clytie to look after her, for I am useless. And now, may I be alone for a little while? I must think things over."

"Good-by. There is a hand bell close at hand for you to ring if you need anything. Don't think too much. Here is your rosary; say your prayers instead."

Jinny lay still, hearkening to the sound of Constance's footsteps till they died away, and all was once more still with noontide silence. Then, with a low cry of anguish, she wrung her hands in tearless agony.

"Oh, God! Why have You taken away my sight?" she wailed. "*She* said 'it *may* return.' Ah! I know better! It is gone—I am certain that it is gone forever!"

Intuitively, with that sure apprehension which comes to us all in moments of crisis, be they of joy or sorrow, she knew that she was doomed to lifelong darkness. Had nature, jealous of her keen prying into sacred secrets, struck the blow? Or was it a scourge of God, a punishment meted out to her because she had once dallied with spiritual issues, turning for a while her back upon the light, seeking the soft gloaming wherein passion dwells? She could not rede this riddle. Instead, she asked herself what sort of a life lay before her; of what use was she now to any one? Ah! therein lay a sting more poignant and more grievous than the sting of death! Rapidly she again reviewed the past. Her life, her gifts, had always been at the service of others; she had kept nothing back. She saw maidenhood absorbed by her devotion to her mother; then the short days of intense love with and for David; motherhood robbed of its joys because they had been given to enrich her own mother; the weary years of serfdom, of tired obedience; and now acute desolation, and nothing but a desert to which to look forward. What had she done to be thus treated? A bereaved mother, a cowed and deserted wife, an unwanted daughter, a useless thing fit only for the rub-

bish heap—thus Jinny saw herself, with blackness in her soul. Then, once more thinking backward, she was again at life's crossroad, and knew that she had chosen wrong when, to please her mother, she had married David instead of refusing to join herself to one with whom no spiritual union had ever been possible. Mr. Grant, Father Robins, both true friends, had bidden her pause and think before she married David, but she had paid no heed. Ah, yes, she had been to blame! She let her thoughts pause to envisage David. She realized that she and her husband had never really shared their lives, and lived together as true companions, because there had never been any communication between their souls. It is the soul that matters. Between them yawned an impassable chasm. Faith—a common, united faith—could alone bridge it, but David was not interested in religion; “tosh,” as he called it, a thing fit only for women and small children. With infinite patience he spent his time forging keys which would fit and open the secret doors of nature; he deemed it not worth his while, or wasted time, to study that golden key which reveals the mind of God.

Thus Jinny realized that she had brought her own dereliction down upon herself; she, rather than God or nature, was to blame. Crouched, like the figure of blind Hope, upon her darkened world, she yet held life's lyre firmly between her hands, because the string of Faith was still unbroken, and would never break.

Christ in His dereliction seemed to those about Him an ignominious failure; it looked as if neither God nor man had further use for Him. Appearances are deceitful. The moment of our greatest usefulness is when—in renunciation's awful consummation—we lie, stripped and helpless, upon life's hardest cross, praying with anguished soul: “Thy will be done.”

CHAPTER XXI

IT must not be supposed that Jinny's tragedy upset the gay current of Pulnaikanal life, now that the season had attained its height. The Rajah and the Ranee were fêted everywhere, and they generously returned the compliment. It was the gayest of all the Pulnaikanal seasons. There was a regatta upon the lake; there were concerts, at-homes and dances at the club and at the Rajah's house; shooting of wild birds, cheeta and panther hunting. The different castes of India, aloof and quarrelsome amongst themselves, secretly or openly at variance with English life, and government, are yet united upon one common pleasure, the joy and zest of hunting. Shikar is their virile bond, their freemasonry; it breaks down barriers, leaves the soul exposed, the beating of the bare heart visible. It cements friendship, heals old quarrels, leads to mutual confidence and understanding. White, brown and black, high and low caste, are one on a hunting day. Therefore hunting should be encouraged, and is encouraged everywhere in India. The tiger is, generally speaking, not only harmless (unless he is the rare man-eater), but useful. Tigers prey upon deer, antelope and wild pig, all crop-destroying pests; but the Government rewards any native who can show a fresh tiger skin, with thirty rupees, upon which sum the man can live in real comfort for a year. The man-eater cannot be ranked among ordinary tigers; he is one of nature's criminals, marked down as an assassin by all law-abiding creatures, beast or human.

Hunting was of course encouraged in Pulnaikanal; the Rajah accompanied by Vaughan (who soon regained his old vigor in the hills), Dr. McIntyre

and Mr. Grant, often went out with the shikarees. The forest which clothed the ghat formed a dense covert for wild life of all sorts; their green aisles, domed and roofed in by leafy boughs, were trodden by silent-footed creatures who perchance slept by day when shafts of sunlight shone through their forest temple, and wandered forth at night beneath the cold pallid moonbeams, to seek one of the rare forest pools at which to slake their thirst.

Unwilling to be separated from Vaughan, Clytie often begged to be allowed to take part in these hunting expeditions, nor was her request refused. Vainly did Mrs. King protest against such a proceeding as unwomanly and forward. Clytie had her own views of what suited womanhood. So tied to the Rajah's entourage was Vaughan that he was unable to visit Mrs. Bevan for several days after his arrival in Pulnaikanal, much as he desired to do so, and Bevan did his best to keep his old friend away.

Never very sociable, always a home-lover, Constance found her time so fully occupied in taking care of Jinny, that she could spare none of it for festivity. Since the death of Mrs. Vaughan she had seldom visited Pulnaikanal. The place was too full of scandal-mongers to be attractive to the lonely woman, whom slander had once attacked so bitterly. As the only Catholic lady in the place, with the exception of course of Jinny, she was a soul apart; her real self unknown, unloved, misunderstood. In Pembranore she was always content, and very happy now that she had Jinny to love and mother. Rumors reached her of Philip's engagement; if they grieved her she did not betray her sorrow; Constance had long since learned the art of smiling in grief's face.

On the second Sunday after his arrival in the hills, Vaughan at last escaped, and early in the afternoon made his way down the ghat, as he hoped, un-

observed. Clytie, who was walking with old Mr. Grant upon Stoker's Walk, with eagle eye descried him upon the zigzag path, and promptly made up her mind to follow. Far down below she saw the roof of the Bevans' house; the lawn, with its lemon and orange shrubs, was clearly visible; the shrill screams of the peacocks rose up as sounds rise on still, clear mountain air.

"Let us go and visit poor dear Jinny," she suggested.

Gladly old Grant assented. It was just what he had longed, yet not dared to propose himself.

"We will!" he said, and they turned immediately upon the downward path.

"If only Miss Jinny had fallen in with my wishes, and devoted herself to singing, how different would her life have been! I offered to have her trained at my expense," said the ex-judge sadly.

This was news to Clytie, who had heard of Mr. Grant's marriage proposal, but nothing about this musical scheme. She snapped up the notion eagerly enough. Something lucrative might yet be arranged for Jinny. The allowance which Hamilton had settled to give his wife proved to be a paltry sum when the first instalment had been sent to her from Colombo. Clytie truly surmised that he had gambled in telegraphic transfers, and lost heavily. The man was as unsound financially as he was morally.

"It's not too late for Jinny to take up singing; she's quite young. Are you still willing to help her?" asked Clytie boldly.

"Yes, quite willing, but I am afraid it is too late; she stoops, and she is broken-spirited."

"Not broken-voiced, however. The stoop can be remedied by exercises; I will see that she begins practising at once. Her blindness won't matter. It may prove advantageous, rather than a handicap;

there's something most pathetic and appealing in a blind singer! Oh, what a grand fairy godfather you are, dear Mr. Grant!"

They discussed ways and means, and planned industriously as they walked down the hill; Jinny could get local lessons in a Madras convent school, and then go to Italy to be finished; a companion could be found to accompany her, or, better still, her mother could do so.

"We must get her a judicial separation from her husband," said Clytie, "or he'll snap up her earnings."

"Oh, that can easily be arranged. No difficulty, since cruelty and resultant blindness can be proved," said the ex-judge.

"A blindness which is incurable," said Clytie. "Such cases never recover, and that adds weight."

"It might be possible to get a divorce out and out," suggested Grant.

"You forget that she is a Catholic," said Clytie drily.

"Ah, so she is!" said Grant.

"But if she wasn't?" said Clytie suggestively, and her eyes twinkled.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife," retorted the old man. "I heard the Commandments read in church this morning."

Philip saw his beloved lady among the orange shrubs; she had gathered some ripe tangerines for Jinny, who lay in a long chair upon the lawn, in the cool shadow of a Wellingtonia. Philip went up to Constance with shining eyes and outstretched hands, and when he reached her side, stooping, he lightly kissed her fruit-filled fingers.

"So you have come at last!" said she, but her tone was sweet as ever; she had no reproach for him whom she had bidden to stay away.

"At last! It's ages since we met; but you are just the same—unchanged, unchangeable," he answered.

"Yes, but how about yourself? Much water has flowed under the bridge of life since we parted, Philip. Your dear mother is no more. She was called away too soon. Dear soul! Her great desire was to be a grandmother, and now your marriage comes too late to give her joy."

"My marriage, Constance?"

"I hear that you are engaged to Clytie King. True, Jinny assures me she knows nothing of it, but I expect you have come to tell us, have you, Philip?"

"Are you joking?"

"Indeed no! Then the report of your engagement is untrue?"

"Utterly! There is not the slightest foundation for such a rumor. Dear friend, surely your own heart must have told you it was false?"

Her eyes fell beneath his own.

"How could you imagine that I would let anyone come between us?" he continued. "You are the only woman in the world whose friendship is worth having, and I prize it too utterly ever to think of marriage."

She raised her eyes, and bravely met his steadfast gaze, which held nothing but purest love and reverence.

"Ah, my dear!" she sighed. "I am not worthy of such devotion; but your friendship is very precious to me, Philip."

"And you have kept safe and well?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes, thanks to Alexander, who has proved invaluable, and developed all the qualities of a trained mental nurse. He is wonderfully tactful and attentive. You know poor Jim is quite insane at times and always moody and preoccupied."

"Will he see me?"

"I cannot say. It entirely depends upon his mood. Ask Alexander."

"My dear, he ought to be in an asylum."

"Never! No, I shall never send him away. It would be cruel. Dr. McIntyre thinks that home treatment is the best. After all, his madness is intermittent, and I am used to it. And it is not as if the children were out here; of course it would never do for them to live with him."

"Well, it is a dull life for you. And how does Jim occupy his time?"

"He reads and gardens; then he often goes shooting with Alexander, when well enough."

"I'm glad you have Jinny with you, any way," said Philip.

He looked into her face with gentle solicitude; it was calm and happy.

"Jinny is very dear to me," she said.

Steps sounded upon the gravel path. Clytie and Mr. Grant suddenly appeared before them. The girl's face was flushed and dusky, her breath came quickly; Constance fancied that she must have been walking very fast.

"Oh, Mrs. Bevan, how do you do?" she said. "It is unceremonious to call on Sunday, but I was most anxious to see dear Jinny."

Her eyes keenly investigated the countenance of Vaughan. It wore an expression she had never seen there before. Jealousy stabbed her heart—he had never looked at her as he looked at Mrs. Bevan. Clytie recalled rumors of his old attachment, which she had hoped was dead—killed by herself. She had poisoned the life of Mrs. Vaughan with anonymous letters about her son's supposed mad folly, and sent duplicates, or even more stinging letters, to Bevan. These, she once imagined, had answered

her purpose. Vanity and hot-headed passion made her believe that she had separated these friends. In Aneimalei, and till to-day in Pulnaikanal, she had possessed Philip Vaughan, or fancied that she did so; would Constance dispute this ownership? If so, let her beware. Clytie had studied Hindu magic; she knew a thing or two about its dread, evil power.

Meanwhile she held Mrs. Bevan's hand in hers, and smiled whilst her eyes rested on Vaughan.

"I am only too pleased to see you and Mr. Grant," said Constance kindly. "But come, let us all go to Jinny."

The blind girl was not idle; her skilful fingers were busy with knitting needles, and although she worked slowly, she made few mistakes. Her face flushed, then paled, when the visitors greeted her. She was hurt because Clytie had not been to see her sooner, but she hid her vexation, and made many inquiries after her mother.

"She is much better, but she needs change of scene. I've sublet the bungalow furnished, to a newly arrived London missionary. Mother and you must return with me in a month to Aneimalei, Jinny. I have arranged your future, or rather Mr. Grant has settled it most generously."

"Oh, no! It is for Miss Jinny to say whether she agrees to our proposals; they may be distasteful to her," corrected the old man.

He drew forward two chairs, and Clytie and he sat down by Jinny's lounge. Mrs. Bevan, accompanied by Vaughan, went to seek Bevan, who was in the house; their quest might be a dangerous one, but Philip did not intend to enter Bevan's household like a thief, his friend must be recognized as the master of the house, and greeted as of old.

"Now, my dear child," said the ex-judge to Jinny, "we have come here to cheer you up; and as nothing

can do so much toward putting a new heart into a woman's body, as to tell her that she is beloved, and has gifts which are needed for the service of mankind, we are here to tell you that."

Jinny smiled; her hands now rested upon her knitting.

"I seem to have been always working for others, don't you think so?" she said quietly. "And after all, the work wasn't really worth doing, because there was nothing in it which could possibly please God—at least I think not. I am going to work for God when I begin to work again. Just now I'm waiting for Him to tell me what to do."

"You remind me of the dying Wolsey," said the old man. "But, my dear Jinny, the Gospel tells us poor mortals to use the talents which Heaven has dowered us. You had two talents—drawing and singing. The one has been taken, and the other left. You ought now to trade with that."

Such a round-about, semi-pious way of talking profoundly irritated Clytie, therefore she waived courtesy, and took a short cut to the goal of this conversation.

"As soon as you feel well, Jinny, you must go to the best convent school in Madras, and study singing. Afterward you will go to Italy with mama, and work under a master. Mr. Grant has offered to pave the way for you, so it will be quite easy."

Jinny's lips tightened slightly; otherwise her expression remained unaltered.

"Mr. Grant has always been a generous soul," she said. "But as a married woman, I need no help, thank you, Clytie. If I wanted to study singing, I could do so, but I don't intend to be a singer."

"Jinny, I can't make head or tail of you!" snapped Clytie. "Mr. Hamilton's allowance is miserably inadequate. We want to get a judicial separation for you, and cut you adrift from him altogether,

start you upon a splendid career, and all you say is, 'No, thank you!'

"Why do you wish to come between me and my husband?" asked Jinny. "I am content with the allowance he has made me. When my health is better, I will go home to him and Cyril, if he sends for me."

"He never will! He told me he would never live with you; his reasons, excuses, were most insulting to us as a family. You may regard him as gone for good and all, my dear!"

Jinny turned pale, and her lips trembled, but she said nothing.

In her very honest heart she knew that Clytie spoke truly, but she need not have told the truth so bluntly. Grant saw how hurt she was, and as usual tried to save the situation.

"Miss Clytie," he said suavely, "I see the Bevans and Vaughan approaching. Do take pity on poor Bevan, or he'll think that you've avoided him on purpose."

The girl took the hint at once. Nor, indeed, was she unwilling to leave her sister. The old judge would know how to handle the case with skill; perhaps it was best to leave Jinny alone with him. Her sister's attitude was excessively provoking.

Clytie was astonished at the changes which four years had wrought in Mr. Bevan. He was elderly, shaggy, and unkempt; the eyes which stared out from his cadaverous face were dim and sunken; his color declared him an habitual opium eater. The hand which he gave to Clytie was tremulous and clammy.

"So you've turned doctor, have you?" he said in shaky accents. "A jolly thing to be a doctor! I often wish I'd taken up physic instead of law. It gives you a tremendous power over other people, and it's lucrative."

"It's not altogether a path of pleasantness, although I like it," answered Clytie. "And other people often defy you; why, my own sister does—we're not all-powerful!"

"Don't prevaricate!" said Bevan testily. "You know quite well that physicians have power over people. They poison some, clap others into lunatic asylums, and no one lifts a finger in protest. Now I dare say you've heard that I am mad, but I'm not, although I have a keeper."

Mrs. Bevan and Vaughan had joined Mr. Grant and Jinny, so Clytie and the lawyer were alone. Alexander was busy plucking lemons out of earshot.

"Are you interested in poisons?" asked Bevan suddenly.

"A little," answered Clytie carelessly.

As a matter of fact she was intensely interested in toxicology, which has a subtle relationship with Hindu magic and devil worship.

"Come into my den, then," said Bevan slyly, "and you shall see my books."

He winked at Clytie, indicating Alexander, whose back was turned.

"Give him the slip!" he whispered. "I'll run; you follow slowly."

He doubled, fled like a rat cross the garden, and disappeared into the bungalow. Clytie trailed after him, and Alexander joined her.

"Missie can whistle if she is afraid," he said, offering her a small object.

"No, thanks," said Clytie coolly, and the man fell back behind her.

Bevan's room looked toward the jungle and the ghat; it was secluded from the garden. It was a curiously untidy room, as ill-kept as its slovenly occupant, littered with guns, whips, leggins and hunting things. Books, a small retort, bottles of

all sorts stood upon the table. A camp bed was pushed into a gloomy corner. The room reeked of opium.

"You may look about!" said Bevan, subsiding into an armchair; he lay back, with half closed eyes, and panted. Then, when Clytie was seated: "This is the only place in the whole house which I can call my own!" he snarled. "When Vaughan stayed here—he's afraid to come here now, except in company like to-day with you and Grant—he had the run of it. Nice, isn't it?"

"You should have a room on the sunny side; this faces wrong," said Clytie, true to her interfering instinct.

"I loath sunshine or light, they hurt my eyes," said Bevan. "Ah!" he continued bitterly. "I'm treated like a lunatic because I know too much; I've seen and heard too much. I could divorce her to-morrow if I chose, and get Vaughan chucked from the service. They know it; therefore 'the poor man is quite mad!' is what they say. Why, it killed his mother—she was a decent woman, proud as a peacock."

"I thought we came here to talk about poisons," said Clytie coldly. This talk about Mrs. Bevan and Philip galled her jealous spirit.

"We did, and we're going to; don't be so impatient!" snapped Bevan irritably.

He pulled open a table drawer, and flung a bundle of documents into Clytie's lap.

"There's poison for you!" he declared. "Just read those letters, anonymous, typed, to hide the identity of the writer, but they all ring true. Read them, I say! Aren't they enough to madden anybody?"

He crouched, as though about to spring upon her, and Clytie's blood ran cold. Could he possibly have

found out that she was the scandal's author? She dismissed the idea; it was impossible. Bevan's head sank down upon his chest; he sobbed.

"I loved her—and I loved him once," he wailed.

"I think I had better leave the room," said Clytie. She stood up, and placed the unread letters upon the table.

"Don't go!" he protested, clutching at her gown. "I've made up my mind to kill Philip, and I'll show you the poison. I'm going to put it in his tea, or in his drink if he stays to-day to dinner. I've posted packets of it to him with different labels; I heard he had malaria, and told him it was a cure. Alexander intercepted my correspondence, therefore he's still alive. You'll help me, won't you Miss King? You are his doctor."

"No!" answered Clytie firmly. "I will not help you to poison Philip. Listen, Mr. Bevan, and don't get excited. He may have been in love with your wife once, but he doesn't love her now. And why? Because, you see, he loves me instead, and I intend to marry him. So don't complain any more about your wrongs; take my advice; make a fresh start; tidy yourself up; be friends again with Mrs. Bevan; turn out of this gloomy den and live in the sunshine."

Bevan tottered to his feet; he seemed thunder-struck, his face and hands twitched with emotion.

"Are you telling me the truth?" he asked in quavering accents.

"I am!" said Clytie boldly, and so self-deceived was she, that she believed it.

"Then shall I congratulate Philip? I loved him once; he was my dearest friend!"

"No, not yet; the engagement will soon be made public," answered Clytie. "Meanwhile, may I beg you to keep the matter a secret between ourselves?"

"Yes, yes, you may trust me. I am not mad, you know; I give you my word of honor to keep the matter dark. I am a lawyer and a gentleman."

"I'll rejoin the others now," said Clytie, "or they'll be wondering at my absence. Make friends with Philip, won't you, and burn those horrid letters."

"I will—indeed I will!" said Bevan humbly; then he broke down, and wept maudlin tears. Sickened and disgusted, Clytie left the room.

When Bevan reappeared, Vaughan was astounded by the change in him. He had shaved and looked fairly clean and tidy. He drew his chair close to the policeman's, and chatted amiably, principally about hunting.

"Let's do a bit of shikar some day, Philip," he suggested, drawing the policeman aside so that they should not be overheard. "Let by-gones be by-gones, Philip; let us be friends again."

"All right, old man," said Vaughan. It was evident that Bevan's insanity had at last taken a more amiable turn.

And Clytie, drinking tea beneath the Wellingtonia on the lawn, pondered over the extraordinary fulfilment of the fakir's vision. Death had most truly encamped about Philip. Who was the woman she had seen in the phantom mirror? Was she Mrs. Bevan? Here Clytie was nonplused. The face—like most visionary faces—had been vague, a suggestion rather than a portrait. The whole affair—foreshadowing an actual fact—left Clytie more firmly than ever convinced that there was real power in Indian magic. It was not in vain that she had visited the temple in Aneimalei, and done puja to the gods; devils or deities, they had befriended her. If Philip did not soon propose marriage, she would invoke their agency again.

CHAPTER XXII

THE club was illuminated by colored fairy lamps, which graced its frontage, and were reflected in golden splashes upon the still waters of the lake below. A merry crowd floated in boats whence music of guitar or banjo wafted, or moved about the dance-room and the compound.

The Rajah's at-home was the gayest entertainment of the season; he and the Ranee graced it with their presence. In a week's time the rains would fall again in Aneimalei and they would return home.

The night was moonlit. Against a pearly sky the wooded hills loomed darkly, and the ghat's high peak showed as a menacing uplifted finger. Upon it blazed a single dazzling ruby that glowed and darkled intermittently; someone had fired the distant jungle.

Clytie leaned back and fixed her gaze upon the far-off firelight. Vaughan sat beside her. They had just quitted the overheated ball-room, and Clytie had wound a red cashmere scarf about her head and shoulders.

"There's one thing I'm dying to take part in before we leave Pulnaikanal," she said wistfully. "You'll arrange it, won't you? I want to go with you on a tiger hunt."

"That is a high ambition," laughed Vaughan. The girl amused him.

"Seriously, I mean it," said Clytie gravely. "Don't be such a dog-in-the-manger as to refuse to take me. I know you are planning one with the Rajah, but I want to go with you alone."

Vaughan felt nonplused. He did not like to refuse the request out and out, but it was an outrageous one.

"Surely you won't refuse a friend like me?" said the girl softly.

The man felt cornered. His friendship with Clytie was often a cause of embarrassment to Vaughan, and yet it was impossible to end it. They had been thrown so much together that comradeship between such old acquaintances as themselves had from the first been inevitable. The Government had lent Vaughan to Aneimalei, and he was obliged to live where duty sent him. She was as much a fixture there as he. Then she had doctored him, nursed him and looked after him. It was not possible to cold-shoulder a girl whom after all he really liked; but he felt that she was weaving webs about him from which it would be very difficult presently to extricate himself. In a subtle, almost uncanny way, he was conscious of Clytie's influence; often he felt her power, wondered at it, disliked the sensation of thralldom, but could not altogether overcome it. He was like a swimmer swimming against the current of a stream; making no headway, being slowly but surely drawn by the water toward swift rapids and inevitable death.

Then, as he was still silent, Clytie continued in her more ordinary voice: "I know why you hesitate. It is because you think that I should be compromised by such a solitary adventure. But has it never struck you that I am compromised already? Every one here thinks that I must be engaged to one with whom I have practically shared the same home in the Rajah's palace. Every day I expect to be slandered and cold-shouldered by Indian society. Therefore, what matters one more indiscretion on which I have set my heart?"

She spoke calmly, even coldly. Her face was not averted; she faced Philip steadily.

He passed his hand across his forehead, and was

not surprised to find it wet with cold perspiration. He felt like a prisoner on trial for his life.

There was no shame, pose, or hesitation about Clytie; obviously she now expected and awaited his proposal as her due.

"You have been one of the kindest of friends to me," said Philip. "But, as I told you in Aneimalei, I have always thought of you as a comrade, a sort of niece—I am so much your senior. Surely you are mistaken in the world's opinion; people who have known us both for years could not possibly have misconstrued our friendship. We are both in the service of the Rajah, professional people both; our living beneath his roof could not therefore be misunderstood or regarded as unconventional."

"You are quite wrong," said Clytie. "The announcement of our engagement is expected. But do not let yourself be upset about it; nobody will dream of avoiding you—a man is never blamed in any circumstances. As for me, I shall snap my fingers at Pulnaikanal. Meanwhile—let me go tiger-hunting."

"You make me feel a cur," said Vaughan, "a bounder. Yet I hardly see how I could have acted otherwise than I have done. I could not have avoided you, now could I?"

Clytie smiled.

"No," she said slowly. "I suppose not. But don't you think the matter could be put straight? Am I so very repulsive, Philip?"

She withdrew the scarf that veiled her head and shoulders. With moonlight gleaming on her hair and throat, she looked alluring; fires lambent as soft moonbeams lay in her dark eyes. Yet Vaughan's heart was untouched, his senses quiet.

"On the contrary, you are beautiful," he said in desperation. "Too charming to think of throwing

yourself away on a middle-aged man like me, who am a confirmed and crusty bachelor!"

Clytie rose.

"Philip, tell me one thing," she murmured. "Are you in love with anybody else?"

So simply was the question put that it was robbed of its bold impudence.

"I am not in love with anyone," he answered, rising also.

To his surprise, greatly to his relief, she laughed and said:

"A good thing for myself and any imaginary 'she.' Had such a one existed I should have killed her. Mine is a jealous nature. And now, for the third time of asking, will you take me hunting? I want excitement, danger even, to soothe my wounded feelings. Also I want to make my ayah a present of tiger claws."

Before Philip had made up his mind whether to say yea or nay, a sudden noise arrested his attention. A crowd of natives armed with sticks and torches swarmed up the road and pressed against the compound palings, chattering, gesticulating, but afraid to enter. Then Vaughan's police peon ran into the club precincts toward his master.

"Nurri! nurri!*" cried the excited natives, afraid to utter the dread word "hooli" (tiger).

The peon explained that these ryots had swarmed up to Pulnaikanal from their village near the tope to tell the Rajah's shikarees that a man-eating tigress had been seen in their neighborhood, and was at present lurking in the jungle.

Clytie clapped her hands.

"Splendid! now we *shall* have a hunt!" she cried.

Vaughan listened to the story of the ryots told by their headman. A tiger had carried away a boy who was tending goats tethered under a tamarind

*Jackal.

tree. The palms, soles, and head of the unhappy lad had been found close to the shola pool near Pembarganore, where the tiger had evidently gone to drink.

Vaughan told the peon to communicate at once with the shikarees and tell them to arrange a hunt next evening. Meanwhile the ryots and trackers must be given rice and ordered to spend the night at Pulnaikanal. They could safely return home by daylight.

Orders were promptly given, and the peon headed off the jabbering, excited men. As he did so, Clytie ran up to him.

"I shall accompany Mr. Vaughan upon this hunt," she said. "Prepare two *mechans*."

"Very good," said the man. He salaamed and retired immediately.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Vaughan.

"No!" and she laughed. "But I am not to be shaken off as easily as you fancy, Philip. Ah! when I saw firelight upon the ghat, I knew tigers would be abroad, driven from their lairs, injured and irritated."

Vaughan felt too angry to reply. He saw the Rajah approach, accompanied by several guests, who were anxious to hear why the villagers had come up. Vaughan immediately went up to His Highness to explain the matter. Mr. Grant stepped gaily to Clytie's side and reminded her that she was his partner for a waltz; the piano had already played its first opening bars.

Various methods of tiger hunting and destroying are employed in India; the animal may be netted and killed by spears; trapped, poisoned, or shot from the *mechan*—a screened tree platform. The last was the customary way in Pulnaikanal country.

Vaughan was in the shola at four o'clock the next

afternoon. As he had neither seen nor heard anything of Clytie in the interval, he hoped she had given up her audacious, hair-brained scheme of joining him. He pressed through the undergrowth past the small rivulet and pool, where Velu had dreamed away his existence as a Sanyasi; the pool which wild creatures visited lay further within the jungle. Both waters were fed by the same runnel. As he approached the wider water he saw the Rajah's shikaree waiting, a man named Krishna. The fellow's tall figure was reflected in the water upon whose verge he stood. Beside him on a grey granite boulder was seated Clytie. The girl was dressed in a short serviceable coat and skirt, and wore long jungle boots with gaiters; she looked an expert modern Diana. In a fine forest tree that stood apart a few feet from the pool, Vaughan saw two leafy platforms. Clytie had somehow succeeded in getting her own way; he must needs make the best of a bad business.

"Really, I admire your courage and determination, Doctor King," he said rather stiffly. "Shall I read you the rules of hunting, or do you know them already?"

Clytie laughed under her breath, and her eyes danced with glee.

"I know them, sahib," she answered pertly. "Three words sum the rule: '*Silentia et spes.*'"

"Missie had better get into the tree," whispered the shikaree. His immobile face showed no trace of feeling, although he realized Vaughan's irritation and intense annoyance. If the sahib had been wise, he would have offered Krishna plenty of money to keep missie away; as it was, he had accepted her paltry bribe in lieu of better. Personally he regretted such an alien presence; all women chatter, and hunting is spoiled by talking. To his surprise the girl instantly obeyed his instructions.

She waved her hand defiantly at Vaughan, mounted the ladder which conducted to her *mechan*, and disappeared. The shikaree swung the ladder on to the other platform, and Vaughan took up his station. The man then vanished among the jungle growths to watch and wait. He had tethered a kid near the water, as a decoy or "kill."

A *mechan* is made of wood, six feet by three, raised fifteen or twenty feet from the ground. Its length looks toward the "kill." It is branched in to form a nest or bower, a hole of about six inches through which to spy and shoot being left in the leafage. Each *mechan* is furnished with a mattress, pillow, rug, and water bottle; sometimes with a book to while away the weary hours of watching, which must be undertaken lying prostrate—a tedious business—as sitting up cramps the feet. The position of the "kill" is so arranged that when the breeze turns at sunset, its scent blows toward the quarter where game may be expected to appear. Absolute silence must be observed during the vigil, which generally ends between eight and nine o'clock, when if the tiger means to appear, it does so.

Vaughan's irritation vanished with Clytie's disappearance; presently he forgot her altogether. He had brought with him the "Dialogues" of Petrarch. Bits out of the book he had often read to Constance as she bent over her embroidery, in the old days when he haunted her husband's house as a familiar and trusted friend. Now, as he coned the work, his thoughts flew to the Bevans' bungalow, so close at hand. He wondered, was she at her embroidery, or whispering the Angelus within their chapel? He felt far happier about her in these days of her husband's apparently steady betterment. Reunion between Jim and herself seemed not impossible. Vaughan hoped so; ever he longed for her true happiness.

Presently his pulse quickened; day was waning, the breeze blew cold all on a sudden; the sky glowed red betwixt tree boles and leafy fans; at any moment the tiger might appear to slake its thirst at the fast darkening pool, for evening had come with all its witchery. Jungle sounds now pattered like rain drops through the broken stillness. Birds and animals ventured to steal forth; the romance and poetry of jungle life began. Bamboo clumps and long reeds swayed and murmured, bowing before visitants invisible to Vaughan. His nerves thrilled with the intense excitement of the expectant hunter. He saw bright eyes peep from between thorny creepers, and knew that monkeys in family groups were moving; one dropped from a tree to pick up a fallen fruit. Darkness came with its giant stride and monstrous cowl, hoping to inspire nature with fear and melancholy. The moon laughed him to scorn; a thousand silvery beams frosted the trees and sparkled on the water. The jungle was transmuted into living silver; a dream of rarest, exquisite sylvan beauty. Vaughan felt intoxicated with delight as he gazed upon it, and felt its mystery envelope and embrace him.

His watch told him that the hour was about seven, when all at once he heard the unmistakable padding of a tiger's pugs. He raised his rifle, and gazed through the *mechan's* opening.

The creature stole like a great cat from behind a bamboo clump into the jungle clearing, and snuffed the air, scenting the kid, which bleated, shivering. Despising the small thing, for she had tasted human blood, the tigress crawled to the water, and began to lap it. Vaughan saw that the animal was badly maimed, and this explained her man-eating vice; incapacitated as a huntress, she had turned to assassination for a living. He aimed at her neck, and was about to fire when he was forestalled. There was

a loud report, and the creature snarled as a bullet from Clytie's rifle fleshed her shoulder. On the instant she swerved from the water-side, and sprawled (she was too maimed and weak to spring) back to the bamboos. Vaughan fired, hoping to hit the tigress, when on the instant a man, armed with a fowling piece, ran across the clearing, and made straight for the lair of the half-hidden cat. In his wake sprang the shikaree, too late to prevent the mad action; their shadows pirouetted upon the moon-whitened clearing like some grim dance of death; then the interloper fired his last shot, and flung down his rifle. There was a crash, a thud and a shrill scream as the tigress rent her reed fastness, and growling, gripped her prey. Vaughan felt a bullet whizz past his ear. Ping! Ping! A snarl—claws wildly beating the air; then the tigress rolled over, dead as a stone, her victim under her. Clytie's second shot had pierced the creature's eye.

Vaughan glimpsed the scene as splashes of black and white. An inky stain lay all about the tigress; a small black immobile patch indicated her mangled victim; the shikaree's bending figure looked like some queer printed letter. It was all bizarre, incredible, stage-like in the bright moonshine.

He never remembered how he at last made one of the curious yet horrid group, and was joined by Clytie. But long before she spoke, he—interiorly, sub-consciously—had grasped the truth. Before the body with its torn larynx was actually seen, he knew quite well it was that of poor Jim Bevan. It seemed as though he had witnessed the whole scene for ages; foreseen and waited for it.

"Moon, full moon, always makes madmen madder," said the girl. "He must have escaped from Alexander, and gone hunting on his own, poor wretch!"

Vaughan could not but admire the deft way in which she bound Bevan's wound, dipping a cloth in water, and laying it on his bruised features, so that he might "look decent when Mrs. Bevan sees him." But at the same time he was repelled. She was so cool, untouched, even calculating, when she gave orders to the shikaree about the extraction of the tiger's claws. By her own wish Vaughan and the shikaree remained beside the body while she went off unattended, unafraid, through the wild beast haunted jungle, to break the news of her husband's tragic death to Constance Bevan.

Vaughan's first instinct had been to go to the house himself, but Clytie overpersuaded him to the contrary. A woman was best told such awful news by one of her own sex, she argued. Very probably Mrs. Bevan might be upset and ill; Clytie would understand; she was a doctor. Natural delicacy urged Philip to agree. This was a mistake, but it was very natural.

Two or three weeks after the tragedy of Jim Bevan's death, Grant—who frequently visited at Pembarganore—had a long talk with Jinny. Chivalry, and a strong dramatic instinct, made him keenly alive to all the possibilities in Jinny; he longed to focus them onto one spot, and make that her career. He feared Mrs. Bevan's influence, as he had always feared it for the girl. Constance was a devotee; enthusiasm is always catching; Jinny might even yet end in a convent. This afternoon they had all three walked in the garden, talking on divers topics; now Constance was in the chapel, and he had Jinny quite to himself again. They paced the lawn together.

"So you remain here till Mrs. Bevan goes to England?" he said. "And afterward?"

"I don't know," answered Jinny.

"Then let me be your counsellor," said Grant. "Without a plan, you will become like a piece of driftwood, tossed upon life's ocean; with a plan, you will be useful to others, happy in yourself. Will you accept the offer I once made to you, and take up music?"

"If it were not for mother I might," said Jinny. "I am stronger, and at times my voice is something like what it used to be. I should be glad to make my own living; for, as you have heard, my husband's speculations have ended disastrously; practically he and Cyril depend upon old Mrs. Hamilton. Our marriage angered her because she was not consulted in the matter, so she will have none of me."

"But—your mother? Clytie has taken your mother in tow," said Grant. "Monopolized her completely, so that you are ousted. Why worry about Mrs. King?"

Jinny flushed, and tears stood in her eyes; since her breakdown they came more easily to the surface.

"I have hurt you, I know," went on the ex-judge, for she made no reply, "but sometimes we have to pinch our friends in order to awaken them. Did your mother take the trouble to come and see you before she went back with the Rajah's party to Aneimalei?"

Jinny shook her head.

"Mr. Grant," she said, "of course it is difficult for us to enter into mother's feelings, and understand her. She was wrapped up in our little home and in Cyril—Cyril especially. Suddenly both were torn away from her. She blames me—wrongly but perhaps naturally—for her sufferings. Had I succeeded in keeping David's love—I speak candidly to you, for you are a true friend—she would never have had to endure such a rupture. Then, too, my

friendship with Vincent irritated her; and she always had an aversion, founded upon jealousy, for Mrs. Bevan. I think it was quite natural for her to turn to Clytie in her distress. Clytie is a success; she was always very fond and proud of Clytie. Her desertion hurt me at the time most terribly; it hurts me still. . . . But I can't help fearing that the day may come when Clytie may tire of mother, and then I hope my dear one may turn again to me. I must be always there, waiting to comfort her."

Grant was touched, but he would not show it; he was ambitious for Jinny's future.

"Waiting means rusting," he said bitterly.

"Not in God's eyes, nor indeed in nature's. You know a good razor doesn't rust when it's laid upon the shelf; rather its edge grows keener. I found that out when I dissected plants for David."

"Then you intend to stand and wait on God's and your mother's pleasure? Vincent must have imbued you, child, with his own spirit of renunciation."

"Renunciation is the highest and the most truly natural thing," answered Jinny. "I found that out, too, when I worked at biology. Why, Mr. Grant, all animals except man accept it as the order of their life. Sacrifice underlies, controls and guides all things and inanimate beings; it is part of, and rooted in that divine love which makes the world go round. It is the Vision Splendid of creation!"

"Your eloquence amazes me," said Grant. "I can only recall the lines about big and little fleas batten-
ing on each other. That's all the biology I ever studied!"

Jinny laughed. Her mood had changed, and she felt merry.

"Oh, you dear man, I feel an ungrateful creature!" she said, linking her hand in the arm that petulantly brushed her shoulder. "Take me indoors, and let us have a little music, Mr. Grant."

"Tell me one thing," insisted the ex-judge. "Are you fairly happy on the whole?"

"Yes, I *am* happy," answered Jinny. "I can trust God. Whatever may be the destiny He has ordained for me, He will, I am certain, help me to fulfil it."

"The destiny of every good woman is to be a queen," asserted Grant. "May you win your crown, my child!"

"It is already mine," she said very softly. "I have been loved—I shall always love—and I am a mother; these blessings make up the crown of womanhood, I think."

"A thorny one, in your case," observed Grant gravely.

"The crown of Love always is, and always was a crown of thorns," said Jinny simply.

About and all around her, nature showed at its fairest; this beauty she could not see, never would see again, but she could feel it. That sense of touch inherent in the blind was hers in a very marked degree. Her fingers, always delicate, had grown more sensitive through years of fine work and manipulation. Touch was a real joy to her. It was good to be alive, if only to feel the breeze blow in her hair, rustle the grass, and kiss her cheek. Spiritually she had developed, blossoming in the school of sorrow. If God had laid His chastening hand upon her, He had consoled where most He hurt. There is a touch of God which once felt ravishes the soul, and Jinny had been allowed to feel it. There is a sight of God, even here on earth, and she had been blessed with this interior vision.

From the chapel Constance, veiled in weeds, heard the piano and Jinny's voice form a sweet harmony. The sound irritated her own soul, which was jangled and full of discords, utterly out of tune. Kneeling, she closed her eyes, and gave herself up to

thought instead of prayer, suffering acutely. Ever since the tragedy, she had blamed herself for her husband's death; he should have been watched more carefully, she submitted; a return of madness might have been foreseen. Yet now it was the jealous bitterness of a lost love and severed friendship that she felt, rather than self-reproach and death's sad poignancy. It was Philip's perfidy which now hurt her most. She wondered why, when she had gone out of the way to speak of, to congratulate him upon, his approaching marriage, he should have denied it, calling their sacred friendship to witness that he was still a free man, and whole-hearted. That Philip had deceived her, this was misery. When Clytie came to break the news of Bevan's death, the girl spoke simply and naturally about her lover; evidently, as Pulnaikanal society averred, they were accustomed to go about together.

"Philip agreed that I had better come instead of him; it was fortunate—wasn't it?—that we were together; but, of course, we generally are."

Those were Clytie's words, and they admitted of only one interpretation—an engagement. Athwart the dark background of Bevan's gruesome end, the girl's words flashed like lightning. The moving hand had written the wife's condemnation in fiery scarlet letters; the woman's broken kingdom—lawful sovereignty in her husband's heart, divided by lawless usurpation over Philip—had been taken from her; she had been weighed in moral balances and been found wanting. She judged herself as a vile sinner, yet felt no contrition, only a tempest of jealous misery. At first she had faced the situation calmly, confronting Philip coldly and serenely when he brought home her husband's body, and also at the funeral. Veiled behind weeds, she had bidden him farewell when he left for Ancimalei; showed no

emotion. But now her soul's stony calm was over, and she was storm-tossed.

Had it been feasible, she would have left India; but she had her husband's estate to wind up, and the bungalow was on her hands for six months longer, so she must wait, and possess her mind in patience if that were possible. Clutching at a locket which hung upon her breast, she opened it, and passionately kissed her children's portraits.

"My darlings! What an ungrateful, passion-driven wretch I am! I still have you to love, and you love me!" she sobbed.

CHAPTER XXIII

ON his return to Aneimalei the Rajah was informed by his dewan of a certain unrest in the small town and little principedom. Sedition bubbled beneath its apparently calm surface. The temple priests had induced, and subsequently fostered, trouble which the dewan had done his utmost to suppress. The main causes of discontent were the various reforms which the Rajah had introduced, chiefly those which concerned women's education and medical administration. The dewan put the matter in a nutshell.

"The people declare that a half-caste woman with the evil eye rules your Highnesses. Of course, it is nonsense, but your Highness comprehends the ignorance and obstinacy of the natives."

The Rajah dismissed his dewan irritably, and went to the ladies' quarters of the palace, where he knew he would hear details of this disquiet from his oldest aunt.

The aged dame had been told by the dewan that she might expect a visit from her august nephew, so she was ready to receive him. Seated upon a divan she poured forth floods of gossip.

It appeared that the doctor missie possessed, without any doubt, the evil eye; disaster accompanied and followed her. She must be sent away.

When the Rajah asked for proofs, details were not wanting. An old man's death agony had been increased by Clytie's mere presence; her anger had raised up ants, which swarmed over the moribund man. A girl had been drowned in a well after speaking to her. Her own sister, even, had gone blind. A tiger had devoured an Englishman. Her brother

had turned away from the holy path in ceasing to be a Sadhu. To gain her own private ends she had pretended to worship the gods and thus angered them. She had induced young married women to study, and even touch, dead low-caste bodies in the hospital. She had even bewitched the English policeman!

"No wonder Lilavati gives you no promise of a child; the evil eye rests upon her!" Thus ended the old woman.

The Rajah was not slow to realize the extreme seriousness of the accusation. Not that he or his wife believed in such a superstition as the evil eye; nevertheless, it was the deadliest charge that could be leveled at anybody. He knew why a dead set had been made against Clytie; as a doctor she had destroyed the lucrative healing practices of priests and devil-dancers; this they could never be expected to forgive.

He left his aunt's presence much put out, and sought for consolation and distraction in the racquet court. By and by the whole matter must be faced and thoroughly cleared up. Perhaps the priests would consent to be kept quiet if given sufficient money; bribes could be tried anyway. That failing, Clytie would have to be sent away, and with her, Mrs. King. It would be a dreadful blow to Lilavati.

The Jesuit missionary might arrive any day now; no stone must be left unturned to get the state and town quiet before he turned up, or matters might assume a yet more serious aspect. The Rance was corresponding with Belgian nuns whom she desired to start a lace-making industry in Aneimalei. Lilavati would be terribly disappointed if they were not allowed to come.

These thoughts tormented the Rajah's mind as

he banged balls furiously against a cement wall, and wished he were back in England.

"Sahib!"

Vaughan, who was taking tea upon the veranda of his bungalow, looked up. Alexander stood at his elbow. The man had re-entered his service after Bevan's death.

"Your honor, the Rajah's peon is here. There is some trouble at the palace."

"Send the man forward."

"Yes, your honor."

A peon, in gaudy scarlet livery, sashed by a green band, approached salaaming.

"Well?" queried Vaughan.

"The doctor missie has disappeared, your honor," said the man.

Instantly Vaughan was on his feet. He gave orders to Alexander, and then asked further details of the peon. The man gave them glibly and rapidly.

Miss King had gone out on her rounds as usual after breakfast, and had not returned either to the palace or the hospital, where she was to have lectured. A native woman who lived upon the borders of the jungle had been attended by her; she was the last who had seen the missie. Would Vaughan sahib ride to her hut? She was too ill to come to the town.

Presently Vaughan dismissed the peon, and, accompanied by a sub-inspector of public, rode out toward the jungle. Both men used bicycles; Clytie, too, generally cycled on her rounds.

As Vaughan rode on he observed that a great number of those white daubed pots and mascots, which natives set up on sticks to avert the evil eye, had been freshly painted. Statues erected at the main entrance of the town for the same purpose were

newly garlanded. These signs of activity annoyed him, for, of course, he had heard of the scandals and rumors concerning Clytie. He could not fail to notice the strange way in which the natives stared at him, chattering and gesticulating to one another. The Aneimalei annual temple fair would shortly be held. Already masons were busy erecting pandals; planks for booths and stalls were being knocked together.

This was the beginning of the cool rainy season. Cultivated fields were green, and every forest tree was a blaze of blossom. Rivulets ran beside the roadway; wells were filling. The evening breeze blew cold, and the flushed sky was already fading into the grey tones which herald nightfall. Pearly mists rose on the horizon, and crept about the dim and distant ghats.

The hut which the policeman made for was situated upon the verge of scrubby land which bordered upon jungle; a waste patch riddled by termite heaps, bearing coarse, tussocky grass and prickly pear. Behind stretched bushes, thorny creepers, umbrageous trees of varied magnitude. It was a mosquito and snake-haunted spot, malarious always; at night dangerously so.

Vaughan and his assistant knocked at the hut's door. A woman, shuddering with ague, opened it. Vaughan questioned her in the vernacular about Clytie. The sufferer explained that the doctor missie had visited her at noon; fearful of the police, she showed a bicycle and a bottle of uncorked medicine, as witnesses to the truth. Afterward, the missie had left her and gone on foot into the jungle.

"Why did the lady do that?" Vaughan questioned. He imagined that the woman must be lying.

"A man and woman came out and beckoned her to follow," was the answer.

When questioned further, she said that the man was an ordinary low-caste ryot; more she could not say. It was useless to try to extract information which she could not give; but the assistant inspector persuaded her to drag herself a few steps beyond the hovel in order that the particular path which the lady had taken into the jungle might be indicated.

The bicycles were left close to the hut. Vaughan and his inspector passed on foot into the undergrowth. Presently they came to a point where the path forked. Here the assistant was told to take one route whilst Vaughan pursued the other. Both had police whistles and revolvers; thus, each could acquaint the other with his whereabouts as the search proceeded.

The night would be moonless, but so far light had not failed; even under the trees the way was clear. But this would not long endure, therefore haste was expedient. With keen observant eyes Vaughan noted that the high grass under the forest trees was still dry and brittle. So far the rains had not made much headway, and showers cannot penetrate the dense leaf mosaic of giant boughs. Every now and again Vaughan hallooed and was answered by his assistant. It had been agreed between them that three whistles should signal the discovery of Clytie.

As he pressed onward, Philip suddenly became subtly aware that he was under observation. Turning, he saw no one; he shouted, but his assistant did not answer; perhaps their paths had fallen too far apart. Very likely rocks now divided them. About this it was impossible to be certain, but he was positive that eyes, whether animal or human he could not say, were keenly watching him. Now and again a twig snapped; otherwise all was silent. He raised the whistle to his lips, intending to blow it once, when suddenly a man armed with a stick sprang

from behind a tree trunk and, before he could sound it, struck at him. He leaped back to avoid the blow; the whistle flew from his hand into the dense undergrowth. Springing forward, he grabbed at his assailant, but the fellow, who was well oiled, eluded his grasp and dashed into the jungle.

Vaughan fired a shot from his revolver. Silence followed the explosion. It occurred to him that his assistant might have been attacked and somehow, in spite of his weapon, have been overpowered. He was now acutely aware of danger, and excitement thrilled him. In the distance he could see a clearing and some dark object, either rock or building. Toward this he now pressed through the ever-increasing darkness. He could hear the rushing of a forest river. Intuitively he knew that the goal was reached at last.

In a glade, close to the riverside, and surrounded by fine trees, stood a small temple, about seven feet high and broad, and perhaps twice as long, slab-built with a flat roof. Philip now knew exactly where he was. This was the well-known temple of an evil deity, one admitted by the natives to be "a very bad god indeed"; a being so subtle and mysterious that no image of him had ever yet been made; so mischievous that he must constantly be propitiated. Philip had once ventured behind the filthy cloth which veiled the holy of holies in this sanctuary, and there had seen a chalked circle and other figures traced upon the floor slabs, signs by which the unimagined was represented. Once or twice a week a ryot priest did puja in the temple, which was visited only by people who had some request to make—folk with incurable diseases, blighted crops, sufferers who in despair turned to the "bad god" for aid. The door to this temple was opened only by the priest or pujari, by means of a crooked iron devised to fit its

elementary lock. Once closed, the door could not easily be unfastened from within. Not that this mattered; no one would dream of lingering inside the squalid building, and the "bad god," being pure spirit, could come and go as he pleased.

Here, in the glade, light shone momentarily from the pale sky where stars already twinkled, but darkness was about to make its giant stride; blackness would follow. Therefore Vaughan lost no time in hammering at the door, whilst at the same time he thrust a short stick into the clumsy wards which formed the lock. He felt convinced that someone was in the temple; possibly the very man who had attacked him was sheltering there.

Philip's first blow was rewarded.

"Let me out!" shouted an angry, horribly frightened creature. Quite unmistakably the voice was Clytie's.

"All right. I'll open it immediately," he answered.

"Oh, Philip! is it you?" came the reply in softer, trembling accents mixed with broken sobs.

"Yes. Don't give way, my dear. There, I've got it unfastened!" exclaimed her rescuer.

As he pulled the door forward Clytie appeared on its threshold, panting and disheveled. She staggered into the open air, and threw herself upon Philip's breast, shivering, laughing, weeping hysterically.

"Oh, my dear, my dear! I've been buried alive for hours!" she cried. "I thought I should have died from fright and utter horror. Philip, not a ray of light shows in that place when the door is shut, and the place is filthy. Oh, I believe that bats have settled on me!"

Vaughan held her closely and let her weep and chatter. She looked as distracted as a poor child

who has borne the agonies of long imprisonment in a dark cupboard. As such he treated her, murmuring comfort, utterly forgetful for the moment that she was a woman—a woman, too, who loved him.

"I am dying of thirst. I hear running water. Give me water, Philip!"

Suddenly she sank down until her knees touched the ground. Vaughan knelt beside her.

"Drink from my flask," he said, and pressed a metal holder to her lips.

She drank, and was speedily revived. Then she munched a biscuit from his sandwich case.

"I was lured here," she said, more calmly. "A woman who has malaria pretty badly was the decoy. Then a man and his wife besought me to come into the jungle and attend to their daughter. So I followed them to this disgusting building; they invited me to go in, and locked the door upon me."

Philip guessed that it was the ryot priest who had deceived Clytie, probably the very man who had attacked him in the jungle. The girl had not been intended to leave the place alive; starvation, in all probability, was her intended doom.

"We must get back to the hut. Can you walk, leaning upon my arm?"

"Yes, but it is so dark, and I am sure there are wild beasts and snakes about."

"I will go first then, and you follow," answered Philip. "I have matches and a bit of candle; they'll scare beasts away."

"Let us stay here. I'd much rather," implored the girl.

"We can't stop here all night," answered Philip. "If we hurry now we shall be back in Aneimalei by dinner time."

Clytie sobbed. It was now so dark that he could barely see her face.

"I daren't go through the woods at night," she wailed. "Oh, Philip, dearest Philip! let's stop here by the river!"

"It's the worst place for snakes. No; pluck up your courage, child, and come along."

He took her hand. She struggled, holding back like an unnerved child.

Without another word Vaughan caught her in his arms; he set his teeth.

"Very well, I will carry you," he said.

He had scarcely stepped six paces when his quick ears noted a sound, slight, yet alarming to one who knew the jungle as well as he did. It was the swift crackling of thorns and dried-up grass. He threw back his head and sniffed the air which blew toward them. Ah! well, he knew the scent, the smell of burning. The pujari had set the jungle grass on fire! He made no mistake. At that moment a cloudy pillar shot with orange reared skyward, one of the great trees was now ablaze. Birds soared in the murky air; dismayed, they hung above the strange conflagration. Philip could hear the beating of many wings. He realized that to attempt the homeward path were madness. There in the glade the chances of being set on fire were very small; yet the clearing was, for that very reason, most unsafe. In a few moments the forest creatures would also seek it as a shelter in the sea of flame. He made up his mind what must be done: upon the temple roof safety awaited Clytie and himself.

He glanced at the pale face which rested upon his breast. The girl's eyes had closed; reaction after terror had set in. Abutting on the temple was a shed that the pujari used as a kitchen in which to cook rice—the god's offering, which is afterward distributed among his worshipers. It would be fairly easy to use this as a mount from which to climb on to the temple roof. Philip aroused Clytie.

"We are in grave danger," he said sternly—roughly almost. "Stand up and come with me as quickly as you can."

The girl slipped to her feet, brought to her senses by his unusual manner. He explained the situation briefly and forcibly. Without much difficulty she managed to reach the flat roof of the temple, where he joined her, keeping an eye open for snakes; but, fortunately, as far as he could see, there were none about.

They had scarcely set their feet upon the stone slabs when a jungle tree fell with a crash, and scattered sparks, like fireworks, all around, to fall upon grasses and lianas, and thus increase the general conflagration. From out the burning bushes sprang a pair of panthers, half mad with terror. Their dark forms stood in the glade. Hesitating, the creatures gazed at the temple roof, pondered whether they also should not shelter there. Vaughan took a steady aim with his revolver; both were shot in an instant. Kneeling, Clytie gazed with strained eyes at the burning jungle that glowed with lambent flame against the smoke-shrouded inky heavens. Then she stretched out her arms as though inspired.

"Oh, Philip, how magnificent!" she exclaimed.

Excitement thrilled and inebriated her like wine; fear died in an ecstasy of admiration; self was forgotten. At that moment she was splendid, full of a personal magnetism which infected and influenced Vaughan; she became part of a night of wonder; one with the magic of it. He felt his senses stirred as though by some sweet poison. Together, in silence, they watched the fire blaze all around them till they were encircled and all but scorched by its lurid ring. Then, exhausted by its own fury it sank, quivered, and died away in smouldering tree boles, and red-hot smoking ashes.

How it all happened Philip never knew, but when

the roar of the conflagration lulled, he found himself kneeling with his arms encircling Clytie, whose head rested happily upon his shoulder.

"I always knew that one day you would come to love me, Philip," she said, passionately. "And the day has at last arrived. Ah! how glad I am that we understand each other, for I chose you for my husband when I was a child! Philip, I seem always to have loved and longed for you. I was horribly jealous of Mrs. Bevan—foolishly so, seeing that she's going into a convent."

Vaughan started guiltily. The thought of Constance stung him to the quick.

"A nun?" he faltered.

"Yes! I have Jinny's letter about it in my pocket. If it were not so dark you could read it, but you can have it to-morrow if you wish. Or has to-morrow come already, Philip?"

"It is just midnight," he answered. "Clytie, lie down and rest—here is my coat, it will keep you warm. I'll sit here and watch for the dawn beside you."

The girl curled herself up obediently, and when Philip had taken up his station by her, she slipped a hand in his; thus she fell asleep, clinging to the man whom at last, by her demon wiles, she had conquered.

The return of Vaughan and Clytie shortly after daybreak was a source of rejoicing in the palace—all the more so because the assistant superintendent of police had arrived in Aneimalei late the previous night, to say that the jungle was on fire, and all trace of his superior lost. Mrs. King clasped her beloved daughter to her breast, weeping with joy. She was in her bedroom, clad in a wrapper with her hair in pins; therefore she was unable to see

Vaughan who, after escorting Clytie home, returned to his own bungalow. Over an early cup of tea, Clytie informed her mother that she was engaged to Philip.

"Well, I *am* glad!" cried Mrs. King. "But if he hadn't proposed he would have behaved badly. Any one who spends all night in a jungle alone with a girl is bound to marry her."

"Nonsense! You are old-fashioned!" Clytie laughed. "Well, I shall write immediately to Jinny," she added.

As she sipped her tea, she decided not to tell her mother anything about the designs of the ryot priest upon her life. It would only worry Mrs. King, who now only thought that she had lost her way when visiting an out-patient. As she had cycled back to Aneimalei with her betrothed, she had begged him not to prosecute the pujari, and Vaughan, aware that the evidence against the man was slight, had agreed to warn him merely. To arrest a pujari would anger the natives, and incite them to further action against Clytie; things were best kept quiet. Meanwhile he made up his mind to try to get transferred from Aneimalei to another district. Clytie was not safe in Aneimalei—they must marry, and leave the state as soon as possible. His heart sank at the thought of wedding Clytie, but it must be done; and perhaps "'twere well 'twere done quickly." Therefore, as soon as he had bathed and breakfasted, he sat down and wrote a letter to Father Robins, asking him to make all necessary arrangements. Clytie had already expressed a wish, tantamount to a command, that the marriage should take place in Pulnaikanal.

This done, he began a letter to Constance, to whom it was most difficult to write. She had already wounded him at the time of her husband's

death by her strange, unaccountable coldness and aloofness; his sympathy had been repulsed, his friendship slighted. Then her intention of entering a novitiate was repugnant to him; she had children; surely her first duty was to them, so young and clinging. Still, he had of course no right to judge her, so he wrote a brief note, telling her of his approaching marriage, wishing her well in the new life which awaited her. Then he lay down on his cane lounge and rested, for he was very weary in mind and body.

He had never liked Aneimalei; now he loathed it. The heathen atmosphere of the town disgusted his Catholic soul; he had seldom been stationed so far from church. Suddenly he felt hungry for the sacraments. Aneimalei, despite its enlightened rulers, was an obscure sink of iniquity, full of deviltry and superstition. From the veranda he hearkened, with closed eyes, to the sound of hammers wielded by carpenters busy erecting pandals. He heard the noise of cart wheels creaking dismally in the hot sunshine; dogs snarled and growled together; swarms of dirty beggars whined and chanted. The place was soul-destroying, and, to his horror, his imagination suddenly pictured Clytie as part of it—one of its inhabitants, Eastern and flamboyant—a demon-worshiper. The blood surged in his brain, and hammered at his wrists. He shivered, and knew that malaria had him in its grip again. He shouted for Alexander, bade him shut out the street glare by pulling down the tatties, bring him quinine and get the letters posted.

"Master is ill; shall I send for the doctor missie?" said Alexander.

"No, God forbid!" snapped Vaughan, so irritably that Alexander was astounded.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN his hot, suffocating simoon of fever, with the future all dark before him, and life a desert, help came to Philip, which very likely saved his heart and brain from collapse and ruin. Father Robins, accompanied by Vincent, arrived in Aneimalei late one afternoon, at what natives call "the hour of cow-dust," because it is the time of day when cattle are called home.

The Jesuits went to the travelers' bungalow, and there were told at once of the policeman's illness.

Father Robins lost no time in paying the sick man a visit; his interview with the Rajah would have to wait. What passed between the priest and Philip does not matter; the invalid was no longer left alone with his servants. Not that Alexander was permitted to open the door to doctor missie, who had for some days clamored in vain for permission to see the master, whose boy had been told to exclude her, no matter what fuss she made. No!

"I shall doctor Mr. Vaughan myself," said Father Robins.

"Good! May our Lady bless you, Father!" exclaimed Alexander. "The natives say that missie has the evil eye. It may or may not be so, but she worries master, who says, 'Keep her away'!"

Philip begged Father Robins and Vincent to make his house their home during their stay in Aneimalei, and the invitation was cordially accepted. Next morning Mass was said in Philip's room; Vincent, Alexander and the invalid received holy communion.

After breakfast the Jesuit left Vincent reading aloud to Philip—whose temperature had fallen, and who was now much better—and drove, accompanied

by a police-constable, to the palace. His interview with the Rajah was a most pleasant one; the young ruler promised to build a girls' school and convent immediately for the Belgian nuns; a boys' school, church and presbytery for the mission. Also he promised a substantial grant. He warned the priest about present unrest in the little state, owing to certain prejudices against secular female education; but hoped that matters would calm down when Miss King married. Personally he and the Ranee were much distressed at the idea of parting with the doctor, whom they both viewed as a particular friend. Her place was to be filled—as far as it could be filled at all—by a lady from the Dufferin college in Madras.

"But you would like to see her Highness and Miss King, would you not?" he said in conclusion, and ordered an attendant to summon the ladies to the drawing-room.

They entered presently, and the Rajah introduced Father Robins to his wife. Clytie greeted the Jesuit effusively; she was extremely anxious to gain his support and friendship.

The Princess said a few words about his mission to the priest, and wished him all success. She hoped that Vincent would be allowed to work in Aneimalei—the impression he had made there was most favorable. Father Robins replied that Vincent would most probably be sent to Aneimalei after his ordination. The Ranee then inquired after Jinny and Mrs. Bevan. She had heard that the latter was to become a Religious, and the notion pleased her—it suggested the devout retired existence of a Hindu widow. Father Robins listened in silence; he neither affirmed nor denied the truth of rumors concerning the destiny of Mrs. Bevan.

"Jinny assured me it was so!" exclaimed Clytie,

who had up to this point kept a restrained and impatient silence.

"Indeed!" answered Father Robins, and that was all.

"And how is Philip?" went on Clytie eagerly. "It is absurd that he should refuse to see me! He has too strict notions of propriety! The Rancee and I wish him to be brought here to the palace—the site of the police bungalow is notoriously malarious—but Alexander said he would not consent. I went to fetch him yesterday in the Rajah's doolie, and was refused admittance—actually!"

"Vaughan is much better to-day," said Father Robins. "His temperature is normal."

"He will need quiet in his convalescence," said Clytie. "It is so quiet and peaceful in the palace, and so cool! Do persuade him to come here, Father, or order him!"

The Jesuit shook his head and smiled.

"Philip is not a child to be ordered about by me," he answered. "And I don't think he notices noise now that his health is better, and his mind at ease. He was in a high fever when I arrived; his brain in a tumult. The tempest of body and mind has now subsided; noise may fret his ears, but it won't touch his soul. That is at peace."

Clytie arched her eyebrows and pursed her lips, for she was annoyed.

"You speak like a faith healer," she said, after a moment's pause.

"Because I am one. But I give quinine."

"Then you won't have him brought to the palace?"

"No. I am certain that it is best for him to remain in his own house."

The Jesuit rose and prepared to take his leave. The Rancee bowed, lifted a portière, and left the

room, beckoning to Clytie to follow. The Rajah moved toward the veranda with the priest.

Clytie hesitated; then she stepped up to Father Robins. Touching his arm, she drew him slightly aside.

"You're not going to oppose my marriage, are you?" she said wistfully. "I know you must hate such a mixed union, and, of course, I shall never be a Catholic. But I love Philip dearly, and I mean to be a good wife to him."

The priest's eyes twinkled with half-veiled amusement. This piqued Clytie, who could find in herself or her speech nothing at all humorous.

"On the contrary, I have already set the wheels of the Juggernaut car going, but they move rather slowly," said Father Robins. "I hope Philip will make you a good husband. No doubt he loves you also?"

Clytie lowered her eyelids, and her lips quivered; the shaft struck home. Then she recovered her poise and audacity.

"No doubt," she retorted, meeting the priest's look with unveiled audacity.

"And Mrs. King? What becomes of her when you marry? Is she to share your home? And your sister Jinny, for whom you so bravely chose a husband—will she live with you?" asked Father Robins somewhat sadly.

"I haven't yet made up my mind what to do about them," answered the girl coldly. "But, of course, they can't live with me. What an idea!"

"Ah, well! God can be trusted to protect His own," said the Jesuit.

After which—to Clytie—ambiguous saying, he bowed and left the room. The Rajah, who had stood on the veranda out of earshot during this conversation, conducted the priest down the steps to

the closed carriage which the dewan had sent to bring him. The minister was uncertain of his people's attitude, and considered it best to keep the missionary half hidden for the present.

Clytie thought that there was something mysterious and underhanded in the way in which Philip avoided her. He was always invisible save to the Jesuits, yet he was now well, rather than convalescent. His attitude oppressed and depressed Clytie; it got on her nerves. Her future began to appear cloudy and overcast.

To set her mind at rest she determined to consult one of those fortune-tellers, who were certain to be present at the fair, and told her ayah to summon the best obtainable to the palace. The woman assured her that a celebrated soothsayer was in Aneimalei, and should be fetched that evening; the fair would be in full swing next day, and he would then be busy.

Lakshmi, the ayah, was as good as her word. After tea, whilst Clytie was reading on her veranda, and Mrs. King was out driving with the Ranee, she introduced a well-dressed man, garbed in spotless muslins. He carried a small bag, and a rolled scroll of paper; a white turban set off to advantage his clean, shiny face, light brown in color; his forehead showed good caste-marks. He salaamed to Clytie, who nodded distantly, and then asked Lakshmi to fetch him a bowl of water, a metal plate, some salt, and an old iron nail, also a flower—a crimson rose by choice. The ayah brought these quickly, and the man sat down on the veranda, close to Clytie's chair. Lakshmi stood at attention a few paces from her mistress; she was greatly interested in this fortune-teller.

"Let the lady show her left hand, and I will reveal the secret of the future," said the man glibly.

Clytie held it out, palm uppermost; the magician scanned it with extreme attention; his face showed some concern.

"The lady has many enemies," he said, "and they are doing their utmost to destroy her; devilish arts, indeed, are being used."

The girl laughed merrily.

"Oh, I am not afraid of them!" she said. "But tell me one thing—will these enemies prevent my marriage?"

"Two gods who wage war with each other avert their faces from the lady; demons have been asked to attack her body; soon, I fear, it will begin to fade away."

"Go to!" exclaimed Clytie, replying in the vernacular to his flowery phrases. "Surely neither heaven nor hell is interested in this small insect? What is she but a fly?"

"May my strength fail if what I say is false!" cried the seer earnestly. "I will prove that my words are true. Let the lady wash her hands to above the wrists in this basin, whilst I pray."

Laughing, Clytie obeyed, the while he muttered incantations and the ayah looked on awed.

Presently the fortune-teller interrupted his muttered spells to bid Clytie grasp the rose in her right hand, and dip both hands, tightly closed, into the water; then he again murmured mantras.

"Now!" he exclaimed, so suddenly that the girl jumped, "turn back the left sleeve, lady!"

Clytie obeyed. To her astonishment and dismay, the creamy whiteness of her rounded arm was disfigured by a small crude human figure traced in crimson outline, and dotted with tiny pin-pricks.

"How on earth did you manage to produce that?" asked the girl.

"Such waxen effigies are made of the lady by her

enemies, but the danger can be counteracted," said the seer.

Taking the metal salver in his left hand, he placed salt, a nail, and the wet crushed rose upon it. With the iron nail, now wet with water, he obliterated the crimson marks from Clytie's arm. Then he begged for silver or gold coin, and Clytie placed rupees upon the salver, beside the salt and rose. The seer stood up, and circled the plate seven times around the girl's head, muttering spells meanwhile. This ceremony, known as *arratty*, was a sure protection against evil. The fortune-teller next placed the salver upon the ground, and bade Clytie step across it. In doing so, she noticed that the rupees were no longer in it; they had mysteriously disappeared, no doubt into the magician's bag!

"Salaam! May I take my leave?" said the fortune-teller. "But one word must yet be spoken before I go. Let the lady accept no gift to-morrow; it is written: 'He that hateth gifts shall live.'"

Clytie stared at the man in vexed perplexity; how well he read her character! Covetous she had certainly always been, both of love and of money.

"Salaam," she responded. "You may take your leave, and luck go with you, friend."

That night was a noisy one. Clytie could not sleep; she felt hot, restless and irritable. Therefore she rose, and rolled back one of the tatties. The palace grounds seemed alive with bull-frogs that "sang" like a hundred boiling kettles; tomtoms were being beaten in the town; worshipers outside some shrine called loudly and monotonously on their god; ever and anon a scavenger jackal howled, and the pack answered him. Cicadas kept up their ceaseless stridulations; a bird sounded monotonous "brain-fever" iterations. There is no nocturnal silence in the tropics. The sky was clear, the moon being in

its first quarter. Down in the herb garden dank mists were swathed, and dew lay heavily. Beneath an umbrageous peepul tree Clytie fancied she could descry a dark figure, seated tailorwise, and steeped in meditation. She started; for no real cause her heart beat rapidly. Had Covindasamy returned to Aneimalei? She strained her eyes, and even as she stared the figure melted like a phantom into air. The quivering tree seemed argus-eyed, and every leaf shook warning fingers at her. A nervous dread seized Clytie; a sense of malignity overwhelmed her with dread of approaching doom. Her hair and skin actually pricked with terror. Hastily lowering the tattie which she had raised, she re-entered the room, and, probably for the first time in her life, knelt by her couch and prayed for protection from—she hardly knew what—something intensely subtle and evil, omnipresent, overpowering, irresistible.

From out the deep gulf where her soul crouched overwhelmed, presently she heard gentle singing. It came from a distant courtyard, where the palace women were busy feeding vessels with oil, that their burning floating wicks might not grow dry. This chanting reassured and soothed the girl. She lay down again to rest, feeling no longer frightened. In imagination she saw the vestals make their obeisance to the god of fire, as they each intoned the hymn:

This lamp proceeds from God above,
This lamp is lit by heavenly love;
So praise we when midnight begins
The flame which burns away our sins.*

Aneimalei fair was in full swing. Under the stately banyan trees, which avenued the main thoroughfare leading to the temple, were fruit and sweetmeat stalls, booths of brass and silver orna-

*Trans: Sir J. D. Rees.

ments, beads and bangles. Here stood a small theater where long, wearisome tragedies or amorous comedies were enacted; there sat a juggler busy with various tricks, sleight of hand and illusions. Cock-fighting attracted knots of youths and betting men; performing goats with monkeys on their backs amused women and children. A hum and buzz of chatter filled the air, merged in the thrum of tomtoms, the wheezing of pipe and "serpent"; instruments of torture to the English musician's ear, but dearly beloved by natives. The street was densely thronged by excited crowds, dressed in their brightest clothes. Gay colors flashed up and down in the dazzling sunshine beneath the intensely bright pale Indian sky. Dust danced round jangling, tinkling, bangle-wearing ankles, and under bare or sandaled feet that trod on blistered and fly-infested plaintain or mango skins. Tomtoms drummed a-down a side street, a narrow lane or alley pierced by an open drain. Here dwelt the oracle of Aneimalei in his dim, cell-like room. There he might be seen looming through the sandal-incensed murk, a tall and sinewy, long-haired man, with bloodshot, pin-pupiled, opium-poisoned eyes; utterer of dark sayings, understood by few or none; obscene; unpleasant.

The shrine wherein stood the image of that particular goddess who was to be especially venerated at noon that day by the inhabitants of Aneimalei, and who was wont to show real activity, whether for good or evil, upon her feast-day, was a small, domed, egg-shaped building, inset like a yolk, and contained within a larger shell-like structure. This formed a wide, covered, railed-in path around the sanctuary which none but priests might enter; where worshippers walked, circumambulating the hidden deity. A flight of steps led from the road up to the portico

or porch whence curved this circular pilgrim-path. Here low wooden beams, all hung with bells, formed, as it were, bars before the cloth-covered sanctuary doorway. As the ascending and descending votaries passed and repassed, they touched and rang these bells. Pujaris, perched on the lowest beam, received offerings or handed them on to other priests, by whom they were taken into the shrine. A flower from the sanctuary, a bouquet, or even a basket of sweets would be given to the faithful in return, according to the measure of the recipient's goddess-accepted offering and her favor. In her dark hiding-place lamps dimly twinkled, sandalwood burned, and a cracked bell tinkled in the hand of a droning priest. Cooked, blood-stained rice was spread before the idol.

Beside the temple grew an immemorial banyan; beneath its grey, twisted, snake-like branches sat a fakir, who rested for awhile in Aneimalei on his return from a distant pilgrimage. Long were his grey unkempt locks, ragged the cloths that covered his ash-smear'd body. He sat as one set apart, in reverential attitude, muttering his devotions beneath his breath.

The town was well policed, constables moved about; Vaughan was on horseback before the place of worship. He paid little or no attention to the devotee, by whom, from beneath half-closed eyelids, he was being closely watched. The fakir had seen this deathly pale English face once before, and in a vision.

At high noon a pujari descended the temple steps, approached the fakir, and whispered in his ear. The ascetic nodded. Then, gripping his knotted stick between his hands, he turned upon his haunches until he faced the hospital, gazing from beneath his lowered eyelids toward its long white roof; gazing, ever

staring; motionless as a snake when it seeks to lure a rabbit into its deadly folds. Almost the surrounding air seemed to quiver and vibrate before his magnetism, as he projected all the force of his personality forward to attain one concentrated devilish desire. She who at his bidding had visited this temple, and bowed before its goddess to gain her own private ends, should come again to gain the ends of those who had spread the blood-stained rice, death-dealing magic, within the hidden shrine, with prayers and awful incantations.

Vaughan noticed a gradual increase of the humming crowd that buzzed about the temple. He rode slowly up and down, vigilant and suspicious.

Presently all eyes seemed to be turned in one direction, as up the avenue came two who walked quickly toward the temple. To his surprise, and indeed dismay—for the street on a feast-day was no place for an English lady—he beheld the ayah Lakshmi and her mistress. Clytie looked dazzlingly conspicuous, in the noontide sunshine, for she wore her hospital dress, a white coat and skirt over a crimson blouse, and carried a large muslin-covered crimson sunshade. This was the hour when she left the hospital, returning to the palace for her tiffin. Why was she now in the very center of the town, far from the Rajah's quarters? Had she been medically summoned? Vaughan, resolved to know, dismounted and, leading his waler, intercepted her as she was about to ascend the temple steps. At his approach the girl hesitated; her eyes, cold and defiant, met his own; there was not the slightest sign of recognition in them; her face looked as if cut in marble. Lakshmi shrank away behind her mistress, her anxious countenance was strained; she feared the frustration, at the eleventh hour, of a plot which she, with the priests and fakir, had so cunningly

devised. Were it to fail, she would be momentarily a great loser, the treasury of the goddess all the richer, because a promised and very heavy bribe need not be paid. She glanced at the fakir. Beneath his lowered eyelids the fish-like orbs stared steadily, insatiably, at Clytie; surely the magnetic power of the magician could not fail. A pujari perched on the bar before the temple gate appeared to the ayah to be as anxious as herself. She prayed beneath her breath to the hidden goddess that all might yet go well.

"Clytie, I am distressed to see you here," said Vaughan. "If you are visiting a patient, let me go with you. You ought not to be all alone among natives."

Without a word, the girl made as if she would pass him, but Vaughan checked her progress, placing his left hand upon her arm. At his touch her face flushed and she frowned, angrily. Her eyes horrified the policeman—they were as soulless as those of a somnambulist.

"Unhand me!" she exclaimed in the vernacular. "How dare you insult a lady on her way to the temple?"

"Clytie! Go home, I beseech you! No Christian, no English woman could dream of entering the temple."

"I am neither a Christian, nor am I English; I am Hindu!" was the appalling answer, spoken so loudly that every word was audible to the priests and the knots of natives clustered about the shrine.

There was a murmur as of approval, a sudden stir among the people, and a push. Some women impudently jostled Vaughan, who stumbled against his horse and lost his hold on Clytie. Instantly they were separated in the seething crowd. Two constables sprang forward; one, seized Vaughan's cur-

veting waler by the bridle, and assisted him to calm and remount the astonished animal, the other—directed so to do by the policeman—sprang after Clytie.

He was too late. Nimbly assisted, nay rushed, up the temple steps by Lakshmi the girl was already lost among the circumambulating fanatics. As a Mohammedan he durst not follow. Before she passed from view, she handed an offering of money or jewels—the constable could not clearly see which—to the perched, eagerly waiting pujari. He decided to await her reappearance, and then escort her back to Vaughan.

Philip rode up and down among the excited natives, pushing them here and there, attempting to restore temporarily broken order. Duty held him; he could not pursue the girl whose mad course he had been powerless to alter. A festival day is always full of hidden danger, charged with the elements of *émeute* and ghastly bloodshed.

From horseback, whence Vaughan watched also for the return of Clytie, the veranda and barred temple entrance were clearly to be seen. And others watched: the natives were also watching, waiting expectantly, he hardly knew for what, except that it was something dread and evil, to be if possible averted. Even the fakir had risen to his feet, and he now faced the temple.

Presently Philip saw a flash of red and white close to the cloth which screened the goddess' shrine, and knew that it was the returning Clytie. Dismounting instantly, he gave his horse to a constable, and walked up the temple steps. As he did so, he saw a brown hand stretch out from behind the sanctuary veil, and present a posy of luscious-scented temple flowers to the lady doctor. For a moment the girl appeared to waver; then—her cupidity prob-

ably excited by a gilded and jeweled holder in which the flowers were placed—she took the gift, and re-passed the perching pujari, who stared with impudent admiration at the gaudy offering that had been given so mysteriously from the shrine, and at the fair recipient.

"Lucky lady!" ejaculated the priest enviously. "Surely much money lies hidden in the holder."

Clearly the observation interested Clytie, for plucking out the bouquet, and scattering its sickly scented petals at her feet, she slipped an inquiring finger into the holder. In the twinkling of an eye the pujari dropped from his perch, dived behind the sanctuary cloth, and disappeared. A shriek rent the air; the gilded bouquet holder tinkled on the stone veranda, as Clytie suddenly fell prone, the fangs of a small deadly serpent fastened in her finger, its coils wreathed round her wrist.

The scream found its echo in a groan which rose from a thousand throats. As Vaughan fell on his knees beside the dying girl, he heard a cracked bell loudly jangling within the sanctuary, and smelt the pungent odor of ascending incense—thanksgiving at the conclusion of the morning service was being offered to the avenging goddess. Vaughan tore the noxious reptile from Clytie's wrist and crushed it beneath his heel. As he did so the girl lifted her head, and gave him a long and perplexed look. Her eyes, bright with recognition now that the fakir's magnetic influence was withdrawn—it had fulfilled its purpose, and he was satisfied—seemed to question Philip as to what had happened and where she was. Then they glazed suddenly, broken and shadowed by the hand of death.

As waves swiftly yet gently recede at low tide, leaving the sands bare, so the crowd of temple worshippers quietly withdrew into the town; the holy

place was rapidly deserted. They were sore afraid; yet in this case the police were powerless. The hand which had presented its deadly offering could never be identified, nor could it be proved that the snake had been purposely introduced into the bouquet holder. The deepest sins of India are most secret.

Clytie's body was quickly covered, placed in a doolie, and taken by the constables back to the hospital, not to the palace—that etiquette forbade—besides, an inquest would have to be held upon it.

Throughout that long Indian day, and far into the night, the town hummed with festivity; only the temple showed dull and silent now that the sacrificial hour was over.

At sunset Covindasamy, loaded with blessings showered upon him by grateful pujaris, and carrying their small but valuable jewel-offerings, hidden within his scanty clothes, left Aneimalei on his way back to the South. He was happy, convinced that he had performed a meritorious work of mercy in ridding Aneimalei of one who, because of her personal influence and evil eye, had been a perpetual menace to the state.

India is full of evil. Rooted in false opinions, its peoples have gradually, through the ages, grown fatally persuaded that such and such a course of sin is right. This is the climax and the fruit of paganism.

CHAPTER XXV

A TELEGRAM from the Ranee announced Clytie's death, and summoned Jinny to Aneimalei. Since the blind girl could not well travel alone, Mrs. Bevan and Mr. Grant accompanied her.

The telegram was delivered at Pembarganore whilst Grant was dining there. That day he had persuaded Mrs. Bevan, who was much run down, to go to England almost immediately, leaving him to attend to her late husband's business affairs, which were sadly muddled. He pointed out to Constance that Clytie's approaching marriage gave Jinny a welcome excuse for inviting herself to the wedding, and finding a new home for Mrs. King, whose future was now most uncertain. At the top of all these plans came the telegram to say that Clytie was no more.

Jinny took the news more philosophically than her friends, who knew her affection for her sister, had anticipated. It almost seemed as though she had expected tragedy where Clytie was concerned. That night the three started for Aneimalei, and arrived there early the next morning, almost before nature was awake.

Beautiful lay the palace gardens beneath the dawn-sky; the flush of oleanders reflected and responded to the blush of day. From a side courtyard the Ranee's cows, small, creamy, and beautifully groomed, their necks hung with marigold or jasmine wreaths, gazed at the approaching carriage; their sweet breath hung like steam upon the dewy air. Minas hopped about the lawns, grub and worm hunting, and a coppersmith bird rang out his *tock-tick* anvil note. Spider-webs, laced with dew, shone pearly in the light; showers which had fallen during

the night hung in blooming trees and chaliced flowers. Constance had never seen a lovelier place.

A scarlet-liveried peon sighted the carriage, and signaled the driver to draw up at the side entrance, Mrs. King's suite of rooms. Here the travelers alighted, and found themselves expected. Rama and Lakshmi had already prepared a light breakfast—eggs, tea and plantains—of which they were glad to partake. Jinny, however, declined refreshment, and begged to be conducted to her mother.

"The mem-sahib is not alone," said Lakshmi; "her son is with her."

"Ah! I am glad of that," said Jinny.

"The other padre and Vaughan sahib will be here shortly," went on the woman. "But nobody can do the lady any good; she is distracted."

"Please take me to her at once," repeated Jinny. A spasm of intense grief and pity shook the girl; her voice quivered with emotion.

"Come, then," said the ayah, and took her by the hand; often she had heard from Clytie of Jinny's blindness.

"Tell me one thing," whispered the girl, when they had walked some paces, "where is my sister?"

She felt the ayah's hand grow cold and damp, and knew that she was frightened.

"She was buried in the herb garden beneath the peepul tree, last evening. It was her favorite spot when she was alive, so her Highness commanded that she should lie there," said the woman.

Although Jinny was unable to see her mother, instinctively she knew when she was in her presence; there was a subtle thrill in the atmosphere of which Jinny was acutely conscious; the air, too, was redolent of grief; despair, like an unseen presence, brooded in it. Jinny moved onward, groping with

her hands until they touched the crouched, inert form of her beloved.

"Mother!" she cried, and clasped the broken-hearted woman to her bosom. Sobs broke the somber stillness of the room.

"Jinny! Oh, Jinny, she is gone—my Clytie's dead! This is the climax of all my miseries!"

At that, Mrs. King cast herself upon the floor, and hid her face in Jinny's skirt. The convulsive heaving of her body witnessed to the breaking of a storm of grief, pent up within her, and too long held back. Jinny did not attempt to interrupt the healing passage of this wave of sorrow; her own tears freely mingled with her mother's. Then she heard the sweet yet austere voice of Vincent:

"Sister, thank God that you have come," he said. "Our mother has refused even to lie down since our sister's burial. All night she has sat here, dumb with misery, and in vain have I wrestled with her grief. Now I will leave you together, and return with Father Robins after Mass."

Jinny heard the light steps of the seminarist pass by her; a hand was laid for a moment upon her head, she took it in her own and gently kissed it. Vincent drew back hastily and left the room.

There was but one remedy for her poor mother's heart, and Jinny knew it must be applied at once; delay might well prove fatal, for despairing hearts and souls, like wounded bodies, must be treated instantly if any cure is to be hoped for.

Therefore, she helped Mrs. King to undress partially, put on a wrapper, and lie down. Then kneeling beside her, Jinny poured all the affection of her own warm nature into the exhausted heart of her afflicted mother, kissing her hands and face repeatedly, lavishing love upon her—love and sympathy, the divinest gifts of the great Healer.

As dawn changed into golden daylight beneath the rays of that transcendent alchemist, the sun, a beam of warmth touched the bowed head lying on Mrs. King's breast. Could Jinny have seen it, there was a smile of peace upon her mother's lips.

"Jinny!" she sighed. "Never leave me, Jinny, will you, until you see me in my coffin?"

And the girl answered, as indeed she had answered years before:

"No, I will never leave you, mother!"

"I have been unkind to you, Jinny," continued her mother; "cruel to you and Vincent, but I am sorry now. God has heavily punished my sin in being a bad, selfish mother, but I'm not angry with Him now—I was, before you came."

She began to sob again, but quietly, as if it eased her soul.

"You are still pretty, Jinny," she went on after a while. "You aren't as young looking as you used to be, but there seems to be something beautiful inside you that wasn't there all those years ago. I hardly know how to put it, but you remind me of a flower which has dropped all its petals and turned into fruit. It sounds silly, but I mean it. Mr. Hamilton was a blind fool to throw away your love, but I've got it all now, every bit. It is the most precious thing in the world to me; I love you dearly, Jinny."

It was a moment of resurrection. Mrs. King had endured her Passion—it was ended. Christ immanent, but hitherto unnoticed and uncared for, had risen on the wings of her own love, within her soul.

"I have been thinking," said Mr. Grant, putting down his tea-cup.

Mrs. Bevan started; she, too, had been thinking during the silence that had lasted since Jinny left

them. Both knew what lay beneath that mound of freshly-turned sods under the peepul tree, which could be seen so clearly from where they sat, on what had once been Clytie's own veranda.

"Yes?" said Constance.

"I'm an old man," observed Grant, "rich and childless. I want a lot of children, and I mean to have them." He smiled whimsically, apologetically. "I'm going to dower those girls' schools which the Belgian nuns intend, by the grace of God, to open here. Children shall yet rise up and call me blessed!"

"How splendid of you, Mr. Grant!" said Constance.

"Then," went on the old man, stroking his vandyke beard, "why shouldn't Mrs. King and Jinny settle down here in a bungalow near the convent and help the nuns? Mrs. King is an excellent house-keeper, and Jinny a rare good teacher. What do you think of that? If you think the plan would work, I'll pay for the building of the new home."

Constance nodded approval; her heart was touched, and speech difficult.

"Then it shall be done," said Grant. "I'm an old man, Mrs. Bevan, and if not altogether wise, not an old fool. I have learned that money is of no value except to rap the gate of heaven with, so I'm going to get mine melted down and made into a knocker. But a knocker isn't much good without a hand behind, and a voice to say what all the tap-tapping is about. So I want you and Jinny to lend me a hand, and voices tuned to prayer. You won't refuse to beseech Heaven for an old man, will you, whilst he's alive, and to pray for the old beggar's soul, if he's so lucky as to get as high on the upward path as purgatory? Hullo, I see the Jesuits

and Philip Vaughan approaching. I'll go at once and tell them of my plan."

Constance rose up; he noticed that she was pale and tremulous.

"Don't leave me, Mr. Grant," she faltered. For once the ex-judge turned a deaf ear to a cry for mercy; he skipped like a lively goat from the veranda.

Suspensions, jealousies, war, then again peace—such are among the miseries of love, and Constance had tasted of them to the full. Yet as Philip approached her, all her own griefs were forgotten in the sight of those ravages which suffering had inflicted upon his loved countenance. Reproach died from her eyes, tears of an infinite pity and tender yearnings filled them; he looked broken-hearted. As in past days, he stooped and kissed the hand which she held out.

"We are still friends, are we not?" said he, "in spite of all I've done and left undone. There is room in your heart for pity and forgiveness, I am sure."

"But I have nothing to forgive," replied Constance. "You were always free to love and marry, Philip."

"Ah, no, dear heart! I lost my freedom when I knew that I loved you, Constance. I could not break my friendship and my love, offering part to any other but yourself: love is a God-bestowed gift, and, like the Giver, indivisible. I have always loved you in God, and God in you, and I can never love you less because you are going to give yourself wholly to God."

"What do you mean?" she cried, laying her hand upon her fast-beating heart.

"Clytie told me that you are to be a nun."

She gave a piteous laugh.

"A nun?" she said. "A woman like me, rebellious, passionate, save for God's grace, bad? Could such a sinner hope to be a nun? Ah! you are joking, Philip!"

He shook his head, perplexed, a trifle wounded by the violence utterly alien to his beloved lady.

"She told me—it was in Jinny's letter—that you were going home into a convent. I thought it strange of you to leave the children, but you were always so devout and good that it must be all right somehow."

Constance laughed again, but this time merrily.

"Why, that was true enough!" she exclaimed, "for I intended when I went home to stay a year in the guest house of Cathie's convent. You know the prioress was a school friend of mine."

Here was rare comfort for him! Philip flushed with joy; his tell-tale face grew radiant; he held out his hands, but she eluded him.

"Tell me, why were you going to marry Clytie when you didn't love her?" questioned Constance.

"I can't explain," he answered. "Make a great act of faith in your friend, dear heart. If I absolve poor Clytie, I condemn myself; her I can't condemn; she loved me, and she is dead—let it rest there. Clytie was in many ways a splendid if deluded creature: she was overwhelmed in a deep gulf of pagan ruin. Constance, after all, this is a devil-haunted land. She had no faith—God will be merciful!"

"Yes, that is very true, poor soul! I understand and sympathize. Passion uncurbed by faith is a mad steed to ride. But here comes Mr. Grant to tell you his grand plan for Jinny."

"You go almost immediately to England, don't you?" asked Philip.

"Yes. It will be heavenly to have the children in their holidays. I shall be home in July."

"And when your mourning is laid aside, I may come and see you, mayn't I, Constance?"

"Yes," she replied, tenderly. "Yes, Philip, you may come!"

THE END

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